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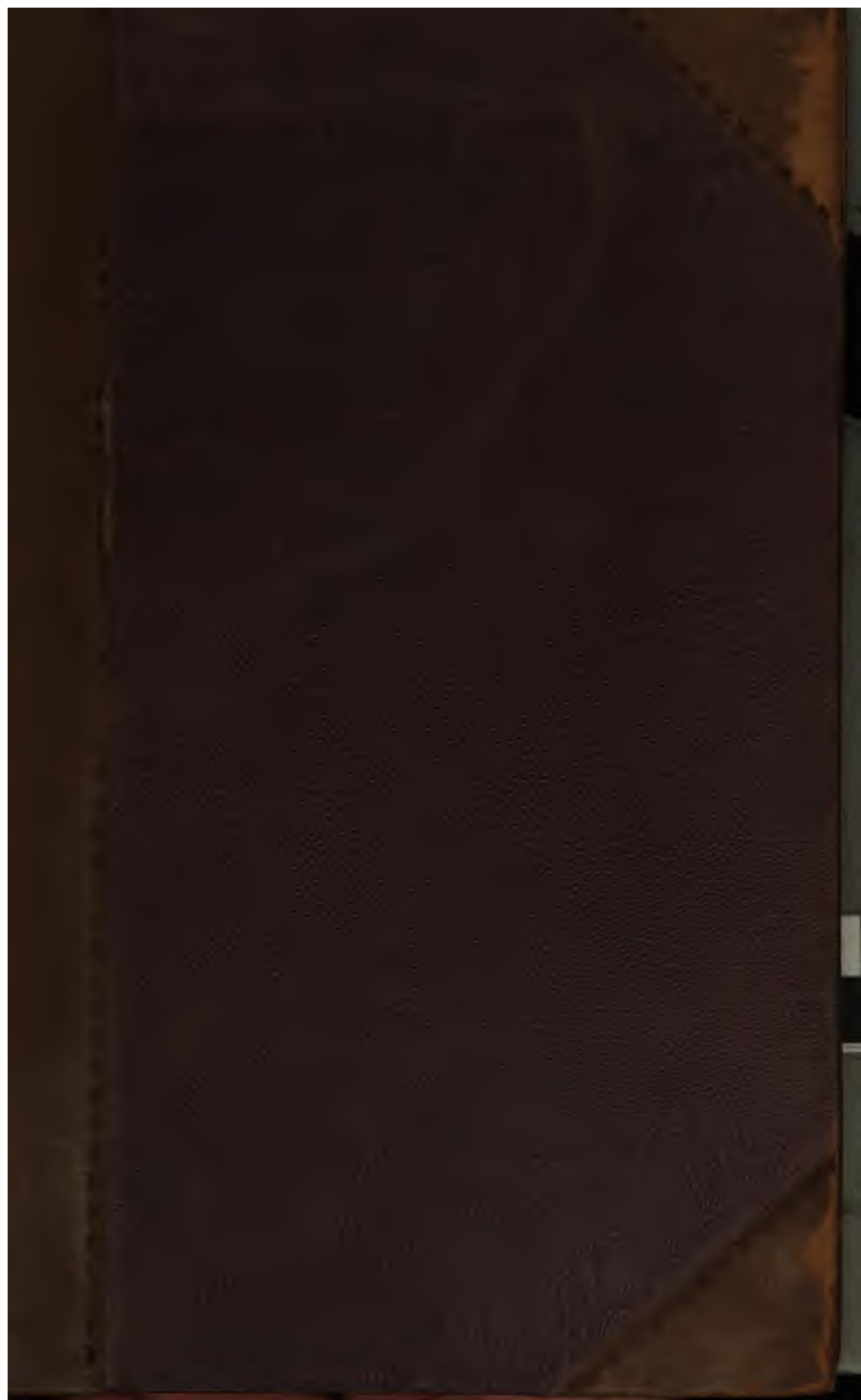
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CIVILIZATION .

OR

A Brief Analysis

OF THE

NATURAL LAWS THAT REGULATE THE NUMBERS AND
CONDITION OF MANKIND.

BY THE HON. A. H. MORETON, M.P.

" And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe ;
And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot ;
And thereby hangs a tale."

AS YOU LIKE IT.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION - - - - -	1
CHAP. I. — On Wages - - - - -	11
CHAP. II. — On Industry - - - - -	46
CHAP. III.—On Combinations to raise or lower Wages	57
CHAP. IV.—On the Limits of the Fund for the Employ- ment of Labour - - - - -	76
CHAP. V.—On the Origin of the Fund for the Employ- ment of Labour - - - - -	91
CHAP. VI.—On the Effect of Civilization upon the Health, Longevity, and Increase of Mankind	114
CHAP. VII.—How the Amount of Population is adapted to the Variations in the Fund for their Sup- port - - - - -	147
CHAP. VIII.—Case in which Population has no Tendency to increase - - - - -	158
CHAP. IX.—On the Causes that may obstruct the Growth of the Manufacturing and Higher Classes - -	170
CHAP. X.—Conclusion - - - - -	202

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is a very broad line of demarcation between mankind and the rest of the animal kingdom in the substitution of reason for instinct. Man requires a long and careful education to enable him even to exist ; while education does nothing for the inferior animals, which are endowed by Nature with all the faculties required for their subsistence. As soon as brute animals have acquired sufficient strength, they begin to seek their food in the same manner as the rest of their species. The experience of a hundred generations adds not to their knowledge. How beautiful and how wonderful is the architecture and the economy of the bee !—yet the first hives they ever constructed were as artfully formed:

and the wax-moth still invades their dwellings with the same impunity that it did in the beginning. Take a dog that has never been off the dry land and throw him into the water—he will swim: throw a man into the water for the first time—he will as certainly be drowned. But man by art learns to swim, and the accumulated experience of ages enables his posterity to circumnavigate the globe—while the swimming of the dog undergoes no improvement.

Here are two broad distinctions between man and the inferior animals—the original helplessness of the individual man, and his subsequent acquired superiority. Secondly, his original weakness as a race, and his subsequent knowledge and power derived from the experience of his predecessors and the ingenuity of the existing generation. Man continues from age to age, and from year to year, acquiring fresh knowledge, fresh enjoyments, and fresh power.

The present work confines itself to an inquiry into the general nature of the alterations gradually and constantly taking place in mankind as a race. This investigation will be found attended

with considerable difficulty, from the infinite variety of distinct causes co-existing in a civilized and complicated state of society—crossing and counteracting one another at every turn. So that, however clearly it may be shewn in theory that a certain effect is produced by a particular cause, a hundred instances may perhaps be adduced in which that cause has been followed by no such effect. If, for instance, it were asserted that the wages of a labourer are in proportion to the value of his labour to the employer, it would be no answer to this to say that, under the operation of the old poor laws, the idle, the drunken, and the profligate were rewarded by a higher scale of remuneration than the frugal, industrious, hard-working labourer ; because here another cause is introduced, sufficient to counteract the former.

It is therefore necessary to caution the reader, that whenever he meets with an assertion that a certain cause will produce a particular effect, he must understand it as meaning, other causes capable of counteracting it not being in operation. Just as the mechanic must first learn the

properties of the screw, the lever, and the wheel, before he can judge of their combined operation.

Considerable difficulty also presents itself to a writer upon a subject of this nature, arising from the small number of well-authenticated statistical records that can be brought to bear upon particular points. Some of these are, as it were, in such a manner isolated, that, from want of other facts to throw light upon them, however interesting they may be in themselves, they lead to no practical result. For example, one of the elements of the statistics of population that fluctuates the least, is the relation that the number of male births bears to the female. The number of boys always exceeds the number of girls ; but, what is very remarkable, the relation that one bears to the other is different in different countries. In France there are about 22 boys born to 21 girls ; in London it is calculated at 19 boys to 18 girls ; and at Naples at 21 boys to 20 girls : but in each country the proportion between them appears to be liable to little variation.*

* “ Statistiques de Paris,” &c., Vol. I., 28me tableau.

One is naturally led to suspect that the proportion of male and female children born may depend upon the respective ages of the parents, and that the effect of the proportion of the sexes of the children, following this law, is to render equal the number of the sexes at the average period of marriage. For instance, if the age of the man at the average period of marriage be assumed at thirty years, and that of the woman at twenty-five, it is evident that it will require a greater proportion of male births to make the numbers of the sexes equal at the average period of marriage.

But this reasoning, to have any weight, requires to be supported by a comparison between average periods of marriage in these three places. M. Chabrol, in the "*Statistiques de la Ville de Paris*," &c., indeed, gives us the average age of the sexes at the period of marriage for a part of France,* but I am not aware that any similar calculation is to be found as relating to London or to Naples.

The value of other tables is very much les-

* Men in their thirtieth year—women in their twenty-fifth.

ened by their being affected by several causes, so as to prevent us from estimating the agency of any one in particular. At first sight, nothing appears easier than to calculate the average duration of human life, by dividing the amount of population by the number of annual deaths. But to obtain any satisfactory result from such a calculation, it is necessary that the population should be stationary,—neither increasing nor diminishing from internal causes, or by emigration or immigration. For if a population be augmenting from an increased number of births, there will be a larger proportion of the population in the earlier periods of life, which will materially affect the proportion of deaths; the same with respect to a diminution in the number of births. Migrations may affect the mortality either way. Thus, in the metropolis, there is a constant immigration of persons between the ages of twenty and thirty—a cause that would tend to reduce the proportionate mortality.

If the duration of life is estimated by the ages of persons at the period of their death, the same difficulty occurs. Thus, in the county of

Lancaster, population doubled itself within the thirty years preceding 1831. It follows, therefore, that children two to one were born there in the year 1831, as compared with the year 1801; in other words, that such infants then composed a double proportion of the population, in comparison with the class thirty years old, than if the population had been stationary since 1801;* a corresponding increase must therefore be expected in the proportion of deaths that take place at an early period of life, without the expectation of life at the period of birth being at all affected by it.

It may be satisfactory to the wedded world to hear, that it is the opinion of those who have turned their attention to the subject,† that the average duration of life is *considerably* greater to married than to single persons, of both sexes, but though there are statistical tables on this subject in existence,‡ these will not afford us

* Population Return, 1831, preface.

† Dr. Jasper—De l'Influence du Mariage sur la Durée de la Vie humaine. Annales d'Hygiène publique, 1835. M. Hufeland—L'Art de prolonger la Vie de l'Homme: Paris, 1824. M. Departieux—Essai sur les Probabilités de la Vie humaine, Paris, 1766.

‡ Vide Annales d'Hygiène publique, 1835, No. 28.

the means of ascertaining the proportionate improvement in the duration of life that matrimony occasions, from the circumstance that those who marry are generally in better circumstances than those who remain single.

Many other important facts have not as yet been satisfactorily ascertained by records of a sufficient number of authenticated facts. Such as, for example, the proportion of births that may be expected from marriages contracted between persons in an early period of life as compared with the offspring of marriages contracted between persons more advanced in life. It has been supposed, from a comparison of a limited number of instances, that the difference is very small, but the author is not aware that there is any calculation upon the subject of any value. Indeed very little appears to be satisfactorily ascertained relating to the number of births to be expected from marriages contracted under different circumstances—such as, in a particular condition of society as compared with another—or as regards the comparative prolificness of marriages among different classes of the same community.

From the difficulty therefore of obtaining statistical facts upon which any weight can be safely rested, the author has generally contented himself with adducing one or two of the least objectionable in support of each particular proposition, rather in the way of examples than as proofs. The authority of these might often be strengthened by the addition of a number of tables—individually, perhaps, none of them strictly correct, but if the greater proportion of them united in having one peculiarity, a sufficient number of instances might establish the existence of a rule.

But however satisfactory such a mode of proof might be to the person who himself searches out the cases, these tables would have no manner of authority when brought forward in support of a particular theory. It would have the appearance of packed evidence.

The small number of statistical records adduced may therefore be looked upon rather as forming a *primâ facie* evidence, than as proofs. And if the opinions herein contained, when tested by the production of a sufficient number

of authenticated facts, and by the reasoning of abler men, be found untenable, should this humble essay be the means of stimulating others to the discovery of any facts useful to mankind, the author will rest satisfied that his labours have not been altogether fruitless.

CHAPTER I.

ON WAGES.

"What might be toward, that this sweaty haste
Doth make the night joint labourer with the day,
Who is it can inform me?"

HAMLET, Act I., Scene I.

THE wealth, the comforts, and the enjoyment of civilized man,—all, in short, that distinguishes him from the naked savage, is the product of labour. Unassisted by labour, nature affords little or nothing for the consumption of man. Some persons, it is true, do not labour at all ; but, to supply their wants, others must labour more abundantly. But those who have no means of subsistence but their labour, no fortune but their industry, compose the greater portion of mankind, and may be said to form the basis upon which the superstructure of society rests.

Whilst this foundation continues sound, the building is secure ; when it decays, the whole fabric is in danger. The peaceful relations of civilized society have been more often disturbed, the laws trampled on, and life and property set at nought, by want or discontent among the labouring classes, than by all the persecutions of fanaticism or intrigues of ambition. An inquiry, therefore, into the causes that affect the condition of the working classes will have the first claim to our attention.

We find in one country the peasant ill-lodged, badly-clothed, and satisfied with the meanest food ; while, in another country, we find him comfortably lodged and decently clothed, possessed of many comforts unknown in the other, and able to afford his children a religious and useful education.

Labouring men in general stand in need of a master, to advance them the materials of their work, and to maintain them until the work be completed. The master, in return, shares in the produce of their labour ; and in his share consists his profits. Sometimes, indeed, an independent

workman has stock sufficient to purchase the materials of his work, and to maintain himself until it is completed. He works upon his own account, and may be said to be both workman and master : for his income consists both of the value of his labour, and the value of his stock, —sources of income generally distinct, and which must be carefully separated in reasoning upon this subject. We will therefore consider as wages the reward that a man gets for his day's work, without minding by whom it is paid.

The labourer derives his support from wages, and his condition will depend upon what those wages will procure for him. The comparative condition of two labourers will be as their wages. These are usually calculated in money, which, as a measure of value, answers well enough for common purposes ; for it is evident, that if two men are working together, and are paid the same amount of money, the one can buy exactly the same amount of goods as the other. But we cannot compare the condition of a labourer who lived a hundred years ago with one of the present day by the difference of their money-wages ; for the money price of everything that a

labourer consumes has probably changed since that time. The same money may now purchase twice as much of some description of goods as it would have done a century ago. In like manner, other things may have become dearer. Many conveniences at this time in common use could not formerly have been procured at all. Again, the money price of every article may rise or fall at the same time, according to the state of the currency: thus prices in general were higher during the war than they are now. Also, in distant places, at the same time, the same thing may be dearer in one country than in another. So that money is not, for all purposes, an accurate measure of wages. We must, therefore, look rather to what a labourer can purchase with his wages than to the amount of money he receives. And it will be found important to distinguish between the amount of food on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the amount of comforts and conveniences that are brought within his reach.

Let us first consider the effect of an increased facility of procuring food.

After any considerable fall in the price of

corn, a man with the same money wages would be able to buy a greater quantity of food ; and persons who, before this fall in the price of corn, with difficulty procured a subsistence, can now accept of work for lower wages, for they are able to subsist themselves and their families upon a smaller sum. Wherever the market of labour was free, there would be a greater competition for work. Beggars would leave begging in the streets, as they found it easier to support themselves by honest labour. The desire of emigrating would subside as provisions became more plentiful at home. The cheapness of wholesome food would enable the poor to rear more children. Also, more persons might be induced to marry, from the greater facility of supporting a family. The supply of labourers would therefore increase, whilst the rate of wages would be lowered by competition ; and masters, having to pay less in wages, would be able to sell their finished articles at a lower price. This they are usually driven to do by competition among themselves. They are also induced to do it with a view to extend their trade, as it is

generally more advantageous to have an extended trade, with lower profits, than a more contracted one, with comparatively higher profits. The price, therefore, of all goods will have a tendency to fall when wages fall.

Now, if the price of all the articles consumed by the labourer fall in the same proportion as wages fall, his condition will be unaltered ; for if he receives, say five per cent. less wages, he pays five per cent. less in his purchases. Suppose the price of labour and the price of food to fall together in the same proportion,—the labourer will then get as much food as before. It does not, however, follow that he will get as much of anything else. For although a fall in wages may reduce the price of every article into which labour enters, it will not reduce them in the same proportion ; for labour seldom constitutes the whole cost of any article.

The cost of everything that is brought to market may be resolved into three elementary parts :—the raw material, from which the finished article is made ;—the profits of the manufacturer ;—and the wages of the labourer.

Thus, in cloth the wool is the raw material; the interest of the capital invested in the trade, with due allowance for risk and uncertainty, constitutes the profits of the master; while the earnings of those employed come under the head of wages. Agricultural produce may likewise be resolved into these constituent parts, by calling the land the raw material, and the corn or cattle raised, the finished article.

The proportions in which these constituent parts enter into the cost of an article, vary in every possible degree. The pendulum spring of a watch, which governs the vibrations of the balance, has been calculated to be worth exactly fifty thousand times the value of the iron out of which it is made;* while in plain gold and silver plate the material constitutes almost the whole value. But if we assume the sum paid in wages to be, on the average, a third part of the cost price; then, supposing food and wages to fall together, each fifteen per cent., the selling price of the manufactured article would fall only one-third of this, or five per cent. Here the

* Babbage—"Economy of Manufactures," p. 127.

fall of five per cent. in the price of goods will be a set off against five per cent. out of the fifteen per cent. reduction of wages ; but against the remaining ten per cent. there will be no set off. The labourer will, consequently, be able to purchase ten per cent. less of other goods, although his command over food remains unaltered. In other words, his food-wages are unchanged, while his comfort-wages are reduced ten per cent.

A fall in the price of food does not in general cause immediately a fall in wages. Its first effect is to increase its abundance to the labourer. Food becomes cheaper, while the rate of wages calculated in money continues the same. It is not until the number of labourers is augmented as compared with the demand, that any fall in wages is to be expected.

Thus a permanent increase in the supply of food will, at first, give the labourer a greater command over food ; next, the number of the labourers will be either immediately or eventually increased : a fall in wages will then take place ; and when population has so far advanced as to

bear the same proportion to the food of the country that it did before, the labourer will cease to enjoy any additional command over food, and will have a less command over articles of comfort and convenience.

Let us now suppose the case of a permanent reduction in the supply of food.

Here the reverse of all that had been above stated will take place. Great distress will at first be brought upon the lower classes. Some might emigrate. There would be a greater difficulty in supporting a family, and fewer children would, in consequence, be reared; for the numbers of the lower orders appear to be limited rather by the difficulty of rearing children than by the number of births.* Fewer, also, might be tempted to marry. The dearness of wholesome food would favour the attack of various diseases, and the general average of mortality would be augmented. A great scarcity, indeed, is generally followed by some violent epidemic.

Now, as the number of labourers diminished,

* Vide Chapter 6th.

wages would rise ; and when they had risen high enough to support the labourers upon a sufficiency of wholesome food, the labourers would have the same command over food that they had before the scarcity, and they would have a greater command over manufactured articles : for these latter, as in the former instance they did not fall in the same proportion as wages, so neither will they now rise in the same proportion.

Let us next consider the effect of alterations in the price of articles of comfort not necessary for the support of existence.

Suppose a labourer to spend a shilling a month in the purchase of cotton goods, and that improvements in their manufacture enable these to be sold at half their former price : he now buys the same cotton goods for sixpence that before cost him a shilling ; so that, after making his usual purchases, he has sixpence left in his pocket. Now, as a fall in the price of cotton goods will not enable the country to maintain a greater population, there being no additional food for their support, there can be

no increased competition to lower wages. Thus the sixpence saved may be considered as so much added to the income of the labourer.

The individual labourer may undoubtedly lay out this additional sum in the purchase of food, and so increase his means of rearing a family. But though an individual may do this, everybody cannot; for if everybody was to spend an additional sum, say one-fifth more, in the purchase of corn, without any increase in the quantity for sale, then it is evident that, the amount of corn being the same, and being divided in the same proportion among the same number of people, each will purchase exactly the same quantity of corn for the greater sum, as he got before for the smaller sum. It is evident, therefore, that if one man buys more, some one else must buy less. And this is practically the case: the man with a family will buy more food; while the increase in the artificial comforts of life that must be sacrificed to enable a man to maintain a family, will form an additional temptation to others to remain in a single state.

The amount of food in a country may be said

to limit the population supported by it ; while the amount of articles of convenience, not necessary to the support of life, measures the comforts to be divided among that population. Thus we hear of people in one country rearing families under circumstances of discomfort and misery that are not to be found in another : a fact that has been accounted for by some writers by supposing that the inhabitants of one country had a superior “ taste for the comforts of life.”* The real reason appears to be, that the power of rearing a family depends upon the command that a man has over food, and the absolute necessities of life ; while his comfortable condition depends upon the command he has over articles of comfort not absolutely necessary to existence.

But though the average condition of labourers throughout a country depends upon the amount of food, and the amount of the various artificial comforts distributable among them, the average wages of the whole body are not to be considered

* Torrens—“ Wages and Combination,” p. 12.

as necessarily being the actual wages of any individual labourer.

When extensive works are undertaken in any part of the country, the wages of common labourers are more or less raised in that neighbourhood as compared with the rest of the country. Let us even suppose the demand for labour throughout the whole country to be constant and equal, and all the work required to be done to be of the same nature. It does not then of necessity follow that every man will earn the same wages, for there is a considerable difference between the rate of wages and the price of labour,—the price of labour being that which a master pays to get a certain amount of work performed—the rate of wages referring to what a labourer earns in a certain time. So that if two men are paid at the same rate for their labour, and one works twice as hard as the other, one will obtain twice the wages that the other does.

But in a complicated condition of society, as in England at the present time, the reward for labour varies in every possible degree, ac-

according to the qualifications required,—such as strength, skill, experience, honesty, or industry in their respective callings, and the proportionate demand that there may be for the services of those possessing such qualifications. So that the wages of a particular class of persons may rise or fall without being directly affected by the number of persons desirous of employment who are not possessed of the requisite qualifications.

There are certain limits, however, beyond which wages cannot fall or rise. They cannot of course permanently fall below a sum sufficient to maintain the labourers and their families in such a manner that their numbers do not fall off. The limits, however, above which wages cannot rise will require further explanation. It was before observed that the cost of every article is resolvable into three constituent parts—the raw material, profits, and wages. Suppose that, in the production of a certain article, ten workmen are employed for a given time at 1*l.* each. Here then the cost of the article will consist of the price of the material, the master's profits, and the 10*l.* paid in wages. Now, if

the material is procured in the cheapest manner, if the master only receives the ordinary rate of profit, and if the selling price of the article cannot be raised, it is certain that the 11. paid to each labourer is the highest wages that he can receive. For if he got more, either the raw material could not be procured, or the master would not receive his ordinary profits and would ultimately retire from the trade, or the finished article could not be sold.

But suppose that the material could be procured cheaper, or that the selling price of the finished article is raised, or thirdly, that some improved economical process is introduced into the manufacture. In any of these cases, a surplus arises, the whole or part of which may fall to the share of the labourer.

Suppose that, in the production of a certain article, 10% is paid for the labour of ten men for a given period ; and suppose further that, by an improvement in the process of the manufacture, two such articles can be produced without any increase of labour : in the manufacture of these two articles, therefore, there is 10% saved. Now

this 10*l.* may be wholly distributed among the labourers, in which case each of them will receive 2*l.* for the same amount of work that he was before paid 1*l.* for. The *possible* wages of the labourer may now be said to have risen from 1*l.* to 2*l.* ; and this, although the wages that he actually receives may not have risen at all ; for the master may put the whole surplus into his own pocket. Or again, the surplus may be entirely swallowed up by a reduction in the selling price ; in which case, the consumer would derive the whole benefit. Or again, this surplus may be divided in any proportions among these three parties. In other words, the labourer may, or may not, get a share of this surplus : but if there be no surplus, it is impossible that he can receive any advance of wages.

Now, of the three parties above alluded to, the labourer is usually the last that derives any benefit from the surplus : for the master will not pay higher wages as long as labour can be procured with the same facility as before. He may even give less ; particularly if the surplus is occasioned by an economy of labour : for

here the demand for labour is diminished, whilst the number of labourers requiring employment remains the same. The master, however, seldom attempts to monopolize the whole surplus, but usually gives up a portion of it to the consumer by lowering his price, calculating that by this means he will obtain a greater sum of profits at the end of the year, by the additional number of customers that the cheapness will attract. This course, indeed, his rivals in trade in most instances compel him to adopt.

Now suppose the trade by this means to be considerably extended, and an increased demand for labour to be consequently induced ; then, if we suppose further the number of persons capable of following that trade to be limited, the different masters in the trade will commence bidding against one another, each trying to retain his own workmen, or procure those of his rivals. And this competition may continue until the whole surplus is expended in raising the wages of the labourer.

Let us take another case, and suppose that the number of labourers that can be procured is

so great that it may be said to be unlimited, but that the amount of capital that can be applied to that trade is strictly limited. Here wages cannot rise, because masters will not give higher wages when there is no increased difficulty in procuring labourers. Neither will the selling price fall,* because the capital employed in producing the article being limited, the supply of the article in the market is also limited: here then the whole surplus will go into the pockets of the masters or capitalists.

Again, suppose the case where both the capital and the labour that can be applied to a trade may be considered as capable of indefinite extension. Here the competition between masters will prevent any rise in profits, and the competition between workmen will prevent any rise in wages; the consumer will consequently reap the whole benefit in a fall of the selling price of the article. Thus the advantage derived from

* Unless to the extent that may be effected by the improved process enabling a greater amount of goods to be produced by the same capital, and thus increasing the supply in the market.

an improvement in manufactures may be distributed in any proportion among the masters, the consumers, and the labourers. But, however it is distributed, society is a gainer, to the amount of the whole surplus obtained.

The limitations of labour and capital above spoken of may be considered rather as comparative than actual. Thus, if the demand for labour increase faster than the number of workmen, the supply of labour may be said to be comparatively limited, and wages will naturally rise: for it is not the actual greatness of the demand for labour, but its increase as compared with the number of labourers, that occasions wages to rise.

Thus, although the same sum of money will purchase a greater amount of the necessaries of life in America than it will in England, the American labourer obtains higher money-wages than the labourer in England. Now this higher rate of wages in America is not occasioned by the supply of labour being less capable of extension than in England, for the reverse is the fact,—population in America multiplying far more



rapidly than in England. But the demand for labour in America as compared with the supply of labour in America, is greater than the demand for labour in England as compared with the supply of labour in England. The chief difficulty in England is to procure work for the labourer and profitable investment for the capitalist. In America, the chief difficulty may be said to be rather the finding labourers to work and capital to invest. The natural consequence is, that in America the labourers demand higher wages, and the capitalists require higher interest for their money,—capital and labour being there more limited as compared with the means of profitable investment and employment. Thus, if we take the cotton manufacture, although in America the raw material is close at hand—although the necessities of life are cheaper—as also timber, fuel, and water power, and their machinery is at least equal to the English, yet we can afford to bring the raw material from America,* as well as the timber to build our

* There is also at present a small duty upon the import of cotton into England.

factories with, and can send the finished article back upon such terms as to be able to compete with the Americans in their own market.

The American, it was shewn, has the advantage over the English manufacturer in cheaper power, cheaper building materials, cheaper food, and in saving the expense of transporting the cotton to England and bringing it back again ; yet he cannot produce his finished article cheaper, because labour and capital being comparatively more limited in America than in England, the labourer and the capitalist take a greater share to themselves.

Having now shewn the different modes in which the surplus obtained by a more economical production of an article may be distributed : we will next proceed to analyze that portion of the surplus that may fall to the share of the labourer.

Suppose that, in consequence of improvements in machinery, a greater amount of cotton goods is produced by the same expenditure ; although increased wages may be paid to the labourer in money, the only addition that is made to the wealth of the community consists of cotton. If,

therefore, the labourer spend part of his additional wages in other articles, the increased demand will have a tendency to raise their price, so that he will not obtain increased comfort in the exact proportion as his wages are raised. The degree in which increased demand raises price, varies materially in different descriptions of goods. In most of the principal manufactures of this country, supply follows so closely upon demand, (the amount produced being, in a great measure, limited by the quantity which can be disposed of at a remuneration price,) that a very considerable addition to the supply can be produced at a trifling, and often at only a temporary advance, of price. In the manufacture of complicated machinery, an increased demand sometimes appears even to have a tendency to lower the cost of production. Mr. Taylor, before a Committee of the House of Commons, gave the following evidence:—"I have invariably observed, that an increased demand for any particular kind of machinery rather has a tendency to diminish price. That has been the case with a vast number of machines in this country :

the power looms, for example, are now made at a very low price, owing to there being a great demand for them. Steam engines in like manner : the great demand for them has put a number of heads and hands to work upon them, and they have been produced at a much less price, in consequence of such increased demand, than they would have been sold for, had the demand been a more limited one."

But the case is far different with some other articles, particularly with agricultural produce. If an arable farm, under ordinary cultivation, produce 100 quarters of wheat, it is probable that no increased expenditure could make it produce 200 quarters ; and any increase of its average crop could only be obtained by a much more than proportionate increase of expenditure. The farmer, it should also be observed, unlike the manufacturer, does not regulate the *amount* of his crop by the demand for it, (though he may alter the kind of his crops according to the taste of his customers,) but always tries to raise as large a produce as he can. For, in long periods of time, population will accommodate

itself to the amount of food ; or, in other words, the demand will accommodate itself to the supply, and not the supply to the demand, as is more or less the case with other articles. And in short periods, as from year to year, the supply, and consequently the price of agricultural produce depends more upon the season than upon the farmer.

An alteration in the system of agriculture may certainly enable corn and cattle to be raised in greater abundance ; but improvements in agriculture are not so frequent, or to such vast extent, as those that take place in manufactures. The chief operations in agriculture are performed by nature :—Wheat rises from the seed to the full ear by the agency of nature alone. All that art can assist it in, is, by giving it full room to operate in, as by weeding, manuring, draining. It should also be observed, that only those improvements that increase quantity have any effect upon the selling price. If corn could be thrashed cheaper by machinery, there would not necessarily be more corn to be thrashed, and unless a greater quantity of corn be brought to

market, there would be no fall in its price. It is true that anything which lowers the cost of bringing corn to market, may induce farmers to plough up some lands that could not before be cultivated with profit, and thus the amount raised might be in a small degree increased : but the great saving made by diminishing the cost of producing the thrashed corn, will go into the pocket of the farmer, and ultimately into that of his landlord : for the owner of the soil may take to himself all that is more than sufficient to give his tenant the ordinary profits of his business.

There does not appear to be any considerable difference in the expense of raising a certain amount of agricultural produce now and a century or two ago. The gradual improvements in the system of husbandry having a constant tendency to make agricultural produce cheaper ; and the farmer, being obliged to have recourse to inferior land, or to pay a higher rent, having a constant tendency to make agricultural produce dearer ; probably these two causes about counter-balance one another. But, be this as it may,

unless the supply of food can increase faster than the population, it will give no increased abundance to the labourer. An increase in the supply of food will eventually increase the numbers of the population, and a reduction in the supply of food will diminish the numbers of the population. While the increase is going on, the labourer will enjoy a temporary abundance ; while the diminution is going on, the labourer will suffer a temporary distress. But as soon as the population has accommodated itself to the supply of food, the only effect will be an alteration in the numbers of the people that have to subsist upon it.

But an increase in the artificial comforts of life may go on for ever without producing any augmentation of the number of persons among whom they are distributed.

The proportion in which the improvements in manufactures or the supply of comforts exceed the increase in the supply of food, is very important ; for the supply of food being the limit of the population, the more the supply of comforts increases as compared with the number of its consumers, the greater the share of comforts

that may be expected to fall to the lot of each individual.

In the natural progress of society, all those inventions and improvements that add to the enjoyment of mankind multiply in a faster ratio than those which only afford the means of mere animal existence : and thus the mass of the population, who derive their only subsistence from their labour, are constantly finding additional conveniences or advantages brought within their reach. They will not be richer in the common acceptation of the word ;—they will be obliged to work as hard as before,—they will find an equal difficulty in subsisting their families ; but their dwellings will be more commodious, and their clothing more comfortable. Thus linen and cotton clothing, shoes, stockings, soap, candles, glass windows, tea, sugar, medicine, the means of giving a religious and useful education to their children, have been one by one added to the comforts of the labouring classes in this country, without at all diminishing the difficulty of procuring food for their families. We often hear of a portion of our

population being in distress from want of food, but we never hear of any serious apprehensions being entertained of their not being able to procure shoes and stockings ; and yet shoes and stockings might be dispensed with easier than food. A large proportion of the women in Ireland are not in the habit of wearing them, or at least they only put them on when they come to a fair or market, and take them off again when they start to return home, thus using them only from motives of ostentation, or, as they call it, to keep up a respectable appearance.

But if the food they subsist on was dearer as compared with the price of shoes and stockings, or, what is the same thing, if shoes and stockings were cheaper as compared with their food, this would no more be the case in Ireland than it is in England.

Every contrivance that tends to economize labour occasions the article in the production of which it is introduced to exchange for a smaller amount of food. Cotton goods have within the last century fallen perhaps a hundred per cent. as

compared with food or with money. These improvements, therefore, though they will not enable a day's wages to exchange for a greater amount of food, will bring within the reach of the labouring man many comforts that before were confined to the rich, if not wholly unknown.

Anything that lowers the price of manufactured articles, increases the command over the conveniences of life to all those who may be enabled, by the fall in price, to make use of those articles ; and if this fall in price is occasioned by any invention or improvement in the process of their manufacture, it becomes a gain to society that is permanent. " There is no instance upon record of any useful invention being lost to the world, save when superseded by some better contrivance, or when the altered habits of mankind have rendered it no longer desirable."*

" Twenty years ago brass knobs for the handles of doors were manufactured at Birmingham at 13s. 4d. per dozen. The same article is now sold, having the same weight of metal, and an equal, or, in fact, a slightly superior finish, at

* Sir Humphrey Davy.

1s. 9½d. per dozen. One circumstance which has produced this economy in the manufacture is, that the lathe upon which the knobs are finished is now turned by a steam engine, so that the workman, relieved from that labour, can make them twenty times as fast as he did formerly.”*

It is evident that there can be no going back to the old system. If any one manufacturer was to attempt it, he would be undersold by the rest. If all the manufacturers in Birmingham were to attempt it, the trade would go elsewhere.

It is well observed by Adam Smith, that “though the accommodation of a common labourer may no doubt appear extremely simple and easy, yet the accommodation of an European prince does not always so much exceed that of an industrious and frugal peasant, as the accommodation of the latter exceeds that of many an African king, the monarch of 10,000 naked savages.”†

But not only is the condition of the labourer

* Babbage, “Economy of Manufactures,” p. 121.

† “Wealth of Nations.”

ameliorated by improvements in the economy of manufactures, but the proportion of those that earn their bread by the sweat of their brow is reduced;—more are released from the drudgery of hard corporal labour—are employed in superintending the work of others—in keeping accounts—or in occupations requiring more skill than bodily fatigue.

Whilst cotton was spun by the hand, there was no great difference between the labour of one spinner and another : but when spinning by machinery was introduced, a great variety of new occupations were engendered : builders, engineers, machine makers, clerks, agents, besides many different descriptions of workmen, all became necessary to the carrying on of the new process of spinning. Now the value of the services of such persons depends upon their individual talents, their experience, or the trust reposed in them.

In the more delicate processes of some manufactures, a single awkwardness will entirely spoil an article upon which much labour has been already expended. It therefore becomes

the interest of the employer to give higher wages to persons who will perform the required operation in a better manner. Such persons will have to be paid in proportion to the value of their abilities ; and where their skill is the result of long practice, they will have to be remunerated, not only for the time actually given to the employer, but also for a part of the time spent in learning their business. If a man has acquired a reputation for honesty, and he is employed in an office of trust, he will have a fair claim to higher wages upon that account ; for the master will save more by diminishing his chance of loss than he would gain by employing an ordinary person. It would, however, be endless to give even a general idea of the different qualifications required in the various operations into which the process of improvement has divided most of our manufactures. Persons unacquainted with trade can form no idea of the number of distinct callings that are necessary for the completion of a single article. Take the case of watch-making. It was given in evidence before a committee of the House of Commons, that

there are 102 distinct branches of this art, to each of which a boy may be put apprentice, and that he only learns his master's department, and is unable, after his apprenticeship has expired, without subsequent instruction, to work at any other branch. The watch finisher, whose business it is to put together the scattered parts, is the only one out of the 102 persons who can work in any other department than his own.

Now, as most of the improvements in manufactures tend to convert that which was before a simple process into a number of distinct operations, and to create a necessity for the employment of persons requiring a higher scale of remuneration, a considerable portion of any surplus that is distributable among the labourers in any trade is necessarily expended in raising a certain number of them to a higher grade. So that although a greater portion of the cost of an article may be expended in wages, this advantage will not necessarily be distributed equally among the labourers employed in that trade. The wages of skilled labourers will not necessarily rise or fall with those of ordinary

workmen ; for in any particular trade the supply of skilled labour is more limited, and its limits cannot be so easily or so rapidly extended. Those whose experience and abilities enable them to conduct the more difficult operations are for a time limited in number ; consequently, any increased demand for their services will raise the value of their labour. But the number of ordinary labourers is only limited by the population of the country : so that it might happen, that while the demand for skilled labour in a particular trade is augmenting, the demand for unskilled labour throughout the country may be falling off ; and while the master is obliged to pay higher wages to his skilled labourers, he may at the same time be paying lower wages to his ordinary labourers. In like manner a falling off in the particular trade will lower the value of skilled labour more rapidly than the reward of unskilled labour. This, however, merely relates to the temporary fluctuations of demand with supply ; but the permanent effect of any improvement that tends to cheapen any article consumed by the labourer, is to increase his comforts, while

his command of the necessities of life remains unchanged. And, in like manner, the cheapening of articles consumed by any portion of the community improves their condition; and, in the ordinary progress of society, those improvements which tend to multiply the comforts of life increase more rapidly than those that merely tend to augment the population.

CHAPTER II.

ON INDUSTRY.

*Τὰ χρηματ' ἀνθρώποισι τιμωτάτα
Δυναμὶν τε πλείστην τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐχει.*

EURIPIDES.

EVERYTHING that tends to diversify the remuneration of labourers, by giving different rates of wages to different descriptions of workmen, promotes industry, by affording each labourer a greater facility of raising the scale of his own remuneration. But where the qualifications required in a labourer are simple, and his reward unvarying, he has no inducement to extraordinary diligence.

It is the number and minuteness of the grades in society that enable the poor man to rise to wealth. The same talents, energy, and perseverance that have raised a man the first step

above his original condition, may enable him to surmount the second ; but if that first step had been beyond his reach, in his original condition he must permanently have remained.

Where the cheapness of the different articles of enjoyment, compared with the rate of wages, brings a number of comforts within the reach of the labourer, he will generally be found industrious ; where every additional exertion enables him to attain some new object of desire, he will naturally try to augment his earnings. Where, however, the artificial comforts of life are dear, as compared with his wages, he will probably be indolent ; for his additional earnings can be turned to little account : a respite from labour being almost the only luxury that his industry can procure him.

Somewhat similar to this, is the case of a workman whose skill enables him to earn more than his fellow-labourers, if his habits of life are the same as theirs ; for thus, having no additional object of desire, he often spends a part of his time in idleness, or consumes his extra wages

in drunkenness. But give him new wants, and you stimulate him to increased industry.

Adam Smith observes, that "where wages are high, we find workmen more active, diligent, and industrious, than where they are low. In England, for instance, than in Scotland; in the neighbourhood of great towns, than in more remote places."* This is the case, not only with reference to the time that they are willing to work, but also to the intensity of their exertions while they are employed. Wages, as we have seen before, are the sum received by the labourer for his employment for a certain time; and differ from the price of labour, which is the sum paid for work done. So that if a labourer is industrious in a greater proportion than his wages are high, work may be performed cheaper by paying higher wages: and this is an every-day occurrence, even in the most ordinary description of labour.

When a work is let out to a contractor to be finished for a certain sum, he usually finds it his

* "Wealth of Nations," vol. i. p. 104.

interest to pay his men higher wages than they could otherwise earn, that he may be able to command their fullest exertions ; knowing, from experience, that by paying higher wages he can secure a greater profit to himself.

Before a Committee of the House of Commons on artisans and machinery, in 1824, one of the witnesses, who had been two years in a manufactory in Alsace, stated that the French make their yarn at a greater expense than the English, though they have their hands for much less wages than in England. He was of opinion that an English spinner would do as much work in six hours as a French spinner would in ten.

It is a common remark of those who have had experience of labourers both in England and Ireland, that though the labourer in Ireland is paid much lower wages than the labourer in England, yet, from his slovenly way of working, it costs nearly as much to get the same work done in Ireland as it does in England. But what is still more remarkable, although this complaint of inertness is made against the labourer in Ireland, when that same individual

comes over to England he is found to work harder than the English ; the higher wages in England stimulating him to greater exertion.

It is not, however, an uncommon error for persons, observing that great commercial prosperity and a high price of food are generally found together, to suppose that the commercial prosperity of every country is occasioned by the scarcity of food enforcing general industry,* and to consider that a country is able to manufacture cheaper in proportion as its food is dear ; and that, "in order to advance trade, provisions must be rendered so dear as to enforce general industry."

Mr. Sadler, in support of this theory, adduced the fact, that in those years when there is a scarcity of provisions in Ireland, there is an increased exportation from that country of linens and other manufactured goods—a fact that may be thus explained :—It is evident, that for the goods imported into Ireland some equivalent must be exported, to pay for them. Now, when

* Sadler, Locke, Ray, &c. Vide "Ireland, its Evils, and their Remedies," pp. 337, 338.

the agricultural produce falls short, to supply their deficiency there must be an increased exportation of linens and other manufactured goods. Also the farmer,—who, in ordinary years, after paying his rent and providing food for his family, has a surplus remaining, with which he is enabled to purchase various additional comforts,—in years of scarcity, when his harvest fails, is forced to deprive himself of numerous conveniences that he was before in the habit of enjoying. There is consequently a smaller demand for such articles in Ireland. Thus there will be a greater abundance of manufactured goods in the market, and a smaller quantity of agricultural produce, than in ordinary years, when it is natural to expect that more of the former and less of the latter would be exported.

To suppose that the cheapness of any article can be caused by the high price paid for the food of those who produce it, is a fallacy of the grossest magnitude. Were this the case, we should have manufacturers petitioning for corn laws, to enable them to undersell foreigners. The fact, however, is, that all things fabricated

by pure manual labour are generally cheapest where the price of labour is lowest ; the cheapness of manufactured articles where labour is dear being attributable to the agency of science and capital.

The more complicated productions of art are generally cheapest where profits are lowest, the rate of profits having a greater influence over their price than the rate of wages. In the production of any article, the wages of labour have to be paid only once ; but as most commodities pass through several hands before they reach the consumer, profits have often to be paid many times. Thus there may be the dealer in the raw material, the merchant, the wholesale and retail dealer, all of whom receive profit for the capital they employ and the risk they incur ; indeed, where much machinery is employed, wages do not necessarily form a large proportion of the expenses of the manufacturer ; for although all machinery is the result of labour, the returns that the manufacturer obtains from it are regulated by the rate of profits, and not by the price of labour.

If 100 men, by the aid of science and capital, are enabled to do the work of 500, the master can afford to give the 100 men higher wages than if he was obliged to employ 500 to do the same work ; for here the labour of 100 men has to be paid for out of what is equal to the produce of 500. In other words, science and machinery has enabled the work to be performed cheaper, *notwithstanding* the high rate of wages, and *not in consequence* of it.

But when a master gives higher wages to his workmen, it is seldom that the price he pays for labour (calculated in the amount and quality of the work done) is raised quite in the same proportion as the rise of wages,* for the better pay will excite the labourer to greater care, diligence, and attention. Thus, though a labourer in one country may receive higher wages than the labourer in another country, yet the work done by the high-paid workman may perhaps be greater in amount or of better quality, so that the price of labour will not generally rise quite

* This, of course, is not intended to apply to mere temporary fluctuations.

in the same proportion as the nominal rate of wages.

It is important to bear in mind that high wages are the cause of industry, and not industry the cause of high wages ; for although the diligence or skill of the individual labourer may be the immediate cause of his receiving a higher scale of wages, yet it was the prospect of the higher reward that first led him to exert himself.

Now if the general increase of industry throughout a country occasions the manufactured comforts and conveniences of life to multiply faster than the population advances, there will be a greater amount of these comforts and conveniences to be divided among the same number of persons ; or, in other words, a greater amount of these comforts and conveniences will be purchasable with the same amount of money or of labour ;—so that, not only the industry of the individual labourer will raise the scale of his own remuneration, but the increased quantity or improved quality of the articles produced will render these articles cheaper or better to all their consumers. It is evident, therefore, that as far

as regards the increase of manufactured articles occasioned by a new application of industry, an additional power of purchasing them will be acquired by every member of the community.

But as regards agriculture also, increased industry applied to the land will raise an additional produce. Now it was stated in a former chapter, that the tendency of an increased agricultural produce is, first, to augment the command of food to the labourer, and secondly, to occasion an increase of population, by affording means of support to a greater number of persons. However, we generally find that when the wages of the labourer are raised, one of the new comforts that he seeks to obtain is a better and more expensive description of food. Now as a labourer who lives chiefly upon a meat diet will consume the produce of much more land than a labourer living upon a vegetable diet, he may be said to consume a greater amount of agricultural produce, not only in quality, but in quantity, as calculated by produce per acre ; so that the demand for the higher description of food by certain classes of the community may occasion the consumption of an increased amount of agricul-

tural produce : and thus, although the science and practice of agriculture may have advanced, it may actually be affording subsistence to a smaller number of persons.

If the improved industry or skill of two labourers enables them to do the work of three, and if it costs one-third more to maintain these two upon a superior diet than it did before to maintain three upon an inferior diet, it will cost about as much to maintain the two labourers as it did formerly to maintain the three ; but as they also do the work of three, the price of labour paid by the employer remains unaltered. Now if it be true that the industry of every class of labourer is regulated by the reward which that industry will procure, it is evident that the additional reward received by the labourer in an improved diet cannot, any more than in other cases, be reduced by the competition of others ; because, where the hope of superior reward is the cause of the industry, in proportion as you diminish the expectation of superior reward, in the same proportion do you diminish the industry that is occasioned by it.

CHAPTER III.

ON COMBINATIONS TO RAISE OR LOWER WAGES.

"I gladly would be better satisfied

How, in our means, we should advance ourselves."

HENRY IV. Second Part, Act I., Scene I.

HITHERTO we have argued upon the supposition of a free competition of labour, each workman and master consulting only his own individual interest without reference to that of others. But, as the labourers in any trade may combine among themselves not to work for less than a certain sum, they may in this manner for a time artificially raise wages. The masters may in like manner agree not to give above a certain price for labour, and may thus for a time reduce wages below their natural level.

Let us first see how far it is in the power of

labourers permanently to raise wages or improve their condition by a combination of this nature.

If there be no fall in the cost of production, or rise in the selling price, an increase of wages can only be made at the expense of the master's profits. Now if these profits are reduced below the average rate of profits in other businesses, the master will be desirous of quitting the trade where profits are reduced, to invest his capital in another, where profits are higher. It sometimes, however, takes much time before any considerable amount of capital can be taken out of one trade, and invested in another. A large proportion of it may be incapable of removal, except at great loss, such as that invested in buildings and durable machinery which is not adaptable to any other business. Now, although a person would not enter into this trade unless he expected to get the full ordinary profits both upon his fixed and upon his moveable capital,—yet, rather than sacrifice his fixed capital, which he would in a great measure do if he left the trade, he finds it his interest to work on as long as he can procure a larger profit upon his fixed and

moveable capital together, than he could obtain before upon his moveable capital alone. But no new adventurer will invest his capital in the trade ; neither will the more durable portions of the machinery be replaced when worn out. Thus the capital employed in the trade will gradually diminish, and the demand for labour in consequence fall off, and the workmen be eventually paid less, and this whether they continue to combine or not ; for if they refuse to accept of lower wages, a smaller number of them will be employed ; and thus the combined body of workmen, in consequence of many of its members receiving no wages at all, may actually receive less money per week from their master in consequence of a successful combination to raise wages.

Sometimes when labourers strike for an advance of wages, the contest between them and their masters continues for so long a time, neither party giving way, that supposing the workmen to be ultimately successful according to their fullest hopes, and that they obtain not only increased wages, but constant employment,

it not unfrequently happens that in the struggle they have expended all their savings, and run themselves so far into debt that they actually find themselves in a worse position than if they had remained constantly at work at the old prices.

One of the commonest causes of combination amongst workmen is to resist a reduction of wages. When the demand for an article slackens; the manufacturer must either sell a smaller quantity of goods, or endeavour to attract more custom by lowering his price. Suppose a manufacturer to employ 60 men, and that his trade falls off one-sixth, he will then require only the labour of fifty, and this reduced demand will naturally lower wages. But if the workmen combine to resist the fall in wages, the manufacturer, as his trade has fallen off one-sixth, will only be able to find work for his men five days in the week, or to employ 50 men out of the 60. In either case the weekly receipts of the 60 men who combined are reduced one-sixth.

Now, if the falling off in the trade is not the mere temporary effect of over production, but

arises from a change in the taste of customers, or from the successful competition of other manufacturers, it is probable that the same cause that occasioned the first falling off in the demand will occasion a second, unless it be counteracted by lowering the price of the article.

But the manufacturer, by this combination among his workmen, actually pays more to produce the same article than he did before. For while in wages there is no reduction, he is obliged to charge himself the same sum as before as interest for the fixed capital invested in his trade, to produce a diminished amount of goods. Thus, to continue to sell the article he manufactures at the same price, he must content himself with smaller profits ; it may, indeed, be out of his power to lower price, particularly if he is trading upon borrowed capital ; for then, unless he pays the interest upon the borrowed sums, he becomes bankrupt.

The capital employed in this trade will naturally continue constantly to diminish, and with it, of course, the demand for labour. Thus the ordinary effect of combinations to raise wages

above their natural rate, is, to reduce them below their previous level. Where such combinations exist, the trade will be contracted ; and, where it is practicable, the manufacturer will be supplanted in the market by goods brought from places where labour is free. Consequently, where a trade is open to the competition of all the world, workmen necessarily perceive it to be their interest to allow their wages to be reduced when the demand for the article they manufacture materially falls. If, for example, the hand-loom weavers, whose wages have been reduced by the competition of the power-loom, were to combine for a rise of wages, their services would be altogether dispensed with.

But in those trades which are not open to any exterior competition, a combination of all that trade living in a particular town is often permanently successful. Suppose, for instance, the masons of a particular place to combine, and by intimidation to prevent any who do not belong to their union from working, there can be no doubt but that they can force their masters to raise their wages.

Let us now examine at whose expense these additional wages are paid. It is not taken out of the pocket of the master builder, because, if he does not get a fair profit upon his capital, he will leave the place or the business, and he has but little fixed capital invested in his trade to keep him long in either. The master builder, therefore, to reimburse himself, charges a higher price for all his buildings. Everybody, therefore, who builds a house pays more for it in consequence of this combination, and charges in return a higher price to his lodger or tenant. What, however, is important to observe, is, that not only the price of lodging in the new houses, but in all the old houses in the town, is raised in consequence of this combination.

When the population of a town advances so as to increase the demand for, and, consequently, the rent of lodgings and houses,—if the price of lodging room rises sufficiently high to make it profitable to build more houses, new houses are in consequence built ; but it is evident that the greater the expense of raising new buildings, the higher must the price of lodging-room

rise, before any new buildings will be undertaken.

Supposing there are 500 houses in a town, and that there is a demand for more lodging-room, but that, in consequence of the high rate of masons' wages, no more than five new houses can be profitably erected,—the proprietors of these houses compensate themselves for the increased expense of building by the higher rent they receive. But the obstruction thus thrown in the way of affording new accommodation to the inhabitants keeps up the price of lodging-room in all the 500 houses in the old town. Thus the increased wages paid to the masons in the erection of only five houses influences the rent paid by the occupants of the 505 houses, of which the town now consists. Every tenant pays more for his lodging, and every landlord receives more rent than he would otherwise be entitled to.

Thus, to raise the wages of the masons employed in the building of five houses, the rent of lodgings in all the 505 houses is kept at a higher price. This is a curious instance of a combina-

tion of a small body of labourers augmenting the rents of the rich who have houses to let, at the expense of the labourers and others who are obliged to hire lodgings.

Take another instance. In the ship-building trade in Dublin the workmen have long had a successful combination to keep up their wages ; the consequence has been, that it became so much more expensive to build ships there than elsewhere, that no ships have been built there for many years, the trade being entirely confined to the repair of vessels trading to that port.

So well aware are the Dublin shipwrights of the effect of competition, that they force their masters to limit the number of their apprentices.

Thus, for the sake of raising the wages of a few hundred artificers, thousands are deprived of a well-remunerated employment, which would have been open to them if the ship-builders of Dublin were enabled to compete in building ships with those of other ports.

In many other trades in Dublin the workmen have entered into combinations. The consequence has been, that while the labourers in

these trades are receiving high wages, the wages of common labourers, whose numbers prevent them from combining, are very low. It was stated by a witness before the Committee of the House of Commons on Trade and Manufactures, in 1825,* that “the wages of skilled labour in Dublin are within a trifle as high as in London; common manual labour at least sixty per cent. under what it is in London: provisions, and all the necessaries of life, twenty-five per cent. less than in London.” Now these common manual labourers are prevented from raising themselves into a class receiving a higher rate of remuneration, or from obtaining more extensive employment, by these combinations that restrict the number of labourers in the different trades. Could the mass of the labourers be made to see their own interest, they would rise in a body to put down these combinations.

The object of the society of the coopers of London is, “to raise and equalize wages—to restrain the future admission of apprentices into

* Robert Hutton, p. 12.

the trade, and to limit the hours during which any man should be permitted to work, though working by the task, so as to fix a maximum upon the exertion and the consequent profits of the skilful and laborious workman, who is not to be allowed to reap the full fruits of his industry, for the purpose of securing employment to those less able and active.”* So great was the injury apprehended to the trade of London not long ago by a strike among these coopers, that the government felt themselves called upon to interfere to prevent detriment to the commerce of that port, and actually supplied casks to those who were in want of them, from the national stores. It is unnecessary to multiply instances of this kind; but in every case it will be found, that however much it may be supposed to be the interest of workmen in a particular trade to combine to raise wages above their natural rate, it is in a much greater degree the interest of the workmen in other trades to

* Report of the Committee of the House of Commons on the Combination Laws, 1825, p. 4.

prevent them from doing so,—either as consumers of the article whose price is raised by the combination, or as inhabitants of a town whose trade may be obstructed by combinations among a particular class of workmen.

The first person who erected a cotton mill in America left England in consequence of combinations among his workmen. Here, not only was the employment afforded by the capital of this manufacturer lost for ever to England, but a new trade was taught to the Americans, who have since become our rivals, and even undersell us in some description of cotton goods.

Even the *fear* of combinations among workmen has a tendency to raise the price of an article. “When a manufacturer enters into a contract, in addition to his other expense, he will have to make some small increase of charge to cover the risk of such an occurrence. If an establishment consist of several branches which can only be carried on jointly—as, for instance, of iron mines, blast furnaces, and a colliery—in which there are distinct classes of workmen, it becomes necessary to keep on hand a larger stock

of materials than would be required if it were certain that no combination would arise. Suppose, for instance, the colliers were to strike for an increase of wages ; — unless there were a stock of coals above ground, the furnaces must be stopped, and the miners also would be thrown out of employ.”

“ Now, the cost of keeping a stock of iron ore, or of coals, above ground is just the same as that of keeping in a drawer unemployed its value in money, (except indeed that the coal suffers a small deterioration by exposure to the elements). The interest of this sum must, therefore, be considered as the price of an insurance against the risk of combination amongst workmen ; and it must, as far as it goes, increase the price of the manufactured article, and, consequently limit the demand that would otherwise exist for it. But every circumstance which tends to limit demand, is injurious to the workmen ; because the wider the demand, the less it is exposed to fluctuation. The effect to which we have alluded is by no means a theoretical conclusion ; the proprietors of one establishment in the trade above men-

tioned think it expedient always to keep above ground a supply of coal for six months, which is, in that instance, equal in value to about 10,000*l.*”*

Thus considerable injury may be done to the community at large, and to the interests of the labourers employed in the trade, before any combination at all has been entered into among them, by the mere apprehension of such combination.

Combinations among workmen have even sometimes the effect of cheapening the article manufactured, and lowering their own wages, by urging their masters to the introduction of contrivances for economizing or superseding human labour. “ A considerable proportion of the processes for economizing human labour have been introduced in consequence of combinations among the workmen. We will take an instance, in the manufacture of gun barrels. About 20 years ago the workmen employed in forging the iron to be converted into gun barrels ‘ struck ’ for an

* Babbage—“ Economy of Manufactures,” p. 249.

advance in wages ; and, as their demands were very exorbitant, they were not immediately complied with. A process occurred to the superintendent, by the introduction of which a great diminution of human labour was effected. The workmen, in consequence, who had acquired peculiar skill in this description of labour, ceased to derive any advantage from their dexterity."

" But another and still more remarkable instance of the effect of combination occurred a few years after in the same trade. The workmen employed in welding the barrels combined for a rise in wages ; the consequence was the introduction of a mode of welding the barrels by iron rollers, in so perfect a manner, that in all probability very few will in future be welded by hand labour. The workmen who had combined were of course no longer wanted ; and instead of benefiting themselves by their combination, they were reduced permanently to a considerably lower rate of wages. But although it is very apparent that in these two cases the effects of combination were permanently injurious to the workmen, yet they do not prove that *all*

combinations have this effect ; but it is evident they all have this tendency. It is also certain, that considerable stimulus must be applied to induce a man to contrive a new and expensive process ; and that in these two cases, unless the fear of pecuniary loss had acted powerfully, the improvement would not have been made.”*

Thus it does not appear to be in the power of labourers, as a class, to improve their condition by combining together to raise their wages above that natural rate occasioned by the relation which the demand for labour bears to the supply : and where a certain number of labourers have succeeded in forcing their wages above this level, they have done it at the expense of the interests of the other labourers who have not combined ; and the benefit enjoyed by the workmen who have combined appears to be in all cases less than the injury done to the remainder of the working classes.

On the other hand, it does not appear to be in the power of the masters by combining together

* Babbage—“ Economy of Manufactures,” pp. 245. 248.

to reduce the wages of the labourer permanently below their natural rate ; for if the workmen are not adequately remunerated for their time, their experience, or their talents, fewer new workmen will enter into that trade, and more will leave it ; so that the supply of efficient workmen, as compared with the demand for them, will be reduced ; when the master will either be obliged to diminish the amount of work to be done, or to pay higher wages, so as to tempt other workmen into his trade. I am not aware of there ever having been any considerable combination among masters to reduce wages below their natural rate. The masters are well aware that it is not in their power to reduce wages permanently below their natural level ; and it is not always the interest of every master that wages should be reduced at a particular moment. For instance,—a master who has a large stock of goods by him is generally opposed to a reduction of wages, for a reduction of wages will produce a reduction in the selling price of the goods, and the master who has goods in store will consequently be obliged to reduce their price,

although he has paid the high rate of wages in their production.*

There appears in general to be little inclination among the masters in an extensive trade to combine to reduce wages. Indeed those possessing extensive capitals are often not averse to a temporary distress, such as would have the effect of destroying some of their smaller rivals.

We sometimes even meet with something like a combination among master manufacturers to raise wages. It was stated by a witness before a Committee of the House of Commons, that "in the manufacture of bed quilts and counterpanes in 1827, there were a great many of the smaller manufacturers that were paying twenty per cent. below the usual price. The high-paying houses said to the weavers that there was no necessity for working at under prices, and that the demand was such that they could give the full wages with the greatest facility; accordingly the workmen co-operated with the best-paying manufacturers, and the masters agreed

* Committee of the House of Commons on Manufactures, Commerce, and Shipping, 1833, p. 703.

to take all the weavers from the low-paying masters, in order that they might be driven out of the trade.”*

When masters do combine to resist a rise of wages, it is generally in consequence of counter-combinations among their workmen.

Thus, however much the combinations among men or among masters may interfere with the free circulation of labour, it is not in the power of labourers, as a class, permanently to improve their condition by a combination for a rise of wages; or in the power of masters, by combining, permanently to reduce the reward for labour below its natural level.

* Committee on Commerce, &c. 1833, p. 912.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE LIMITS OF THE FUND FOR THE EMPLOY-
MENT OF LABOUR.*Falstaff.* What money is in my purse?*Page.* Seven groats and twopence.

HENRY IV., Part Second, Act I. Sc. II.

THE population of a country can never exceed the number that its supply of food is capable of maintaining.

Countries, however, commercially connected, may be in some respects considered as forming one community. Suppose two countries, A and B, trading together; A, a country exclusively agricultural, B, a country exclusively manufacturing: it is evident, that should A cease to produce, B must cease to manufacture; also that the number of the manufacturing population

of B must be limited by the amount of the surplus produce of A. The labour and skill employed in manufactures in B will only affect the quantity and the quality of the goods sent to A, but can never enable B to employ a single additional labourer, so long as the commerce is confined to these two countries. But if C, a second manufacturing country, be introduced, in proportion as B, by machinery or skill, is enabled to undersell C, so will it be enabled to maintain a greater number of labourers ; but the total number of persons in B and C must depend upon the surplus produce of A ; and these three countries will, in this respect, form but one community.

The commerce of two countries, neither of which imports provisions from the other, merely regards the conveniences and luxuries of life, without in the smallest degree affecting the amount of population in either. But wherever a country imports corn or other provisions in return for manufactures, its exports procure it a share of the food grown in another. Thus the means of producing food may belong to one

country, while the power of purchasing it may be vested in another. We accordingly find that in some countries there is a large exportation of provisions, while many are in a state of destitution at home.

If food or manufactures are imported into a country, there will be an additional quantity of them to be divided among its inhabitants. If manufactured goods are exported, it is evident that the people can derive no additional comfort from the manufactures thus taken away from them. But if food is imported in return, the population will obtain an additional supply of food, and of food only, by their manufacture of comforts. So likewise the people will derive no additional means of subsistence from the circumstance of food being exported from their country. But if other articles are imported in return, there will be an additional amount of these articles to be distributed among them. If these articles are such as are consumed by the labouring classes, an increased amount of them will lower their price to the labourer. But if they consist of such articles as are consumed only by the rich, the enjoy-

ments of the rich, who consume them, will be alone enhanced.

If the food or the manufactures exported are sent abroad as a consignment of rent due to an absentee, nothing will be imported in return. If a person living in England, whose expenditure gives employment to 50 Englishmen, goes to reside abroad, and gives employment to 50 foreigners instead of 50 English, the value of the wages of the 50 English labourers which is exported to enable the absentee to maintain these foreigners, is so much taken away from the fund for the support of labour in England, and so much added to the fund for the support of labour abroad. This proposition, simple and self-evident as it appears, has been by no means universally assented to. Mr. M'Culloch is of opinion that absenteeism is rather a benefit to a country than otherwise ; and considers that as the rent of an Irish non-resident landlord is exported to him in the productions of Ireland, the inhabitants of that country derive as much advantage from his consumption as if he had

remained at home. "Where," says he, "is the difference to Ireland, in so far as the demand for commodities is concerned, whether a landlord is or is not resident? When he is resident he will receive his rent, say 10,000*l.*, and will go into the market and buy an equal amount of corn, beef, hats, shoes, &c. ; and when he is not resident, a merchant gets the 10,000*l.*, and lays out every sixpence of it in the purchase of Irish commodities, just as the landlord did when he was at home."

It is perfectly true that when the landlord goes abroad, Irish produce to the value of his income will be exported; but the real question is, will anything be imported in return into Ireland, to pay for it?

If the farmer exports the value of the rent of his farm, and gives his landlord a bill for the amount upon the foreign merchant to whom it is consigned, the merchant, instead of sending back other goods in return, makes over the value to the absentee landlord; and thus no return is made to the country from which the rent is drawn.

The rent paid to the landlord consists in the surplus that the land produces after paying the expenses of its cultivation. This is either taken in the very corn, sheep, and cattle, (as was formerly the case,) or in their equivalent. Now, as the landlord cannot himself consume the whole rent of his land in the form of agricultural produce, he distributes it amongst those, who by their labour in their respective callings, afford him a return proportioned in value to the shares that they respectively receive from him.

The landlord, therefore, affords support to that number of persons that his income, if paid in the form of agricultural produce, would be capable of maintaining.

The whole of every man's income is expended either directly or indirectly in the payment of wages. Suppose a man purchase any article, say a carriage; a part of the price is immediately laid out in wages to the different workmen employed—such as wheelwrights, smiths, painters. There are others who, in addition to their labour or superintendence, will have to be remunerated for the capital they have employed;

—such as the master-coachmaker, the dealers in iron, leather, and cloth. These receive both wages and profits. But in what are their profits consumed, except in paying their tailors, shoemakers, and others who contribute to their comfort?

The expense, then, of the carriage is made up of the wages of those directly or indirectly connected with its manufacture, together with the price paid for the raw material out of which it is made. Now, the wood out of which the coach pannels are made bears a certain value while it is yet growing in the tree, before any labour has been expended on it. The price of this wood goes into the pocket of the owner of the soil upon which the tree grew; but the owner of the soil spends his income in the payment of the wages of the servants, tailors, shoemakers, and others who labour for his benefit; and the timber is only of value to him as it enables him to purchase the labour, or the fruits of the labour, of others. If neither the coachmaker nor any one else wanted his timber, he would have so much less money to spend.

So that, also, the price of the raw material, and consequently the whole price of the carriage, is ultimately expended in wages.

It has been shewn before that the profits received by the different tradesmen employed gave employment and support to others who laboured for the benefit of those receiving these profits. By a similar reasoning it may be shewn that the same is the case with wages. Thus, though we have resolved the whole price of the carriage into wages, this will give us no idea of the numbers indirectly deriving subsistence from the sum paid for the carriage.

If we suppose a labourer to expend three-fourths of his earnings in the purchase of food, and one-fourth in the purchase of clothing and other manufactured articles,—and suppose, farther, that on the average one manufacturer is able to produce clothing and other manufactured articles sufficient for four persons ; then one man out of every four is employed in producing clothing and other manufactures for himself and three others, and one-fourth of the wages of these other three goes to provide this man with

food. So that the one-fourth of the wages that the labourer does not himself expend upon food goes to provide food for those who supply him with clothing and other manufactured articles. Thus the number of persons that a given expenditure affords support to, will be exactly equal to the number of persons that this expenditure would maintain, if immediately employed in the purchase of human food.* The number that can be supported by it will only vary according to

* Mr. Ricardo held a singular opinion upon this subject. ("Ricardo on Political Economy," third edit., p. 475.) "If a landlord," says he, "or a capitalist, expend his revenue in the manner of an ancient baron, in the support of a great number of retainers, or menial servants, he will give employment to much more labour than if he expended it on fine clothes or costly furniture, on carriages or horses, or in the purchase of any other luxuries. In both cases the net revenue would be the same, and so would be the gross revenue; but the former would be realized in different commodities. If my revenue were 10,000*l.*, the same quantity nearly of productive labour would be employed, whether I realized it in fine clothes or costly furniture, &c. &c., or in a quantity of food and clothing of the same value. If, however, I realized my revenue in the first set of commodities, no more labour would be *consequently* employed: I should enjoy my fine clothes, and there would be an end of them; but if I realized my revenue in food and clothing, and my

the quality of the food upon which they subsist, for the same sum of money, or the same extent of land, will maintain more day labourers living upon potatoes, than it will master-coachmakers living upon meat and poultry.

Thus, whether all these labourers derive their subsistence immediately from the consumer of the article, or indirectly in the manner above described, the number of persons that a given expenditure will afford support to will be equal to the number that its value, if wholly converted into food, would provide subsistence for.

If a person wanting a carriage buys it at Paris instead of in England, he will deprive a certain number of English labourers of employment, and to about the same extent give additional employment to French labourers. The fund for the support of labour in England will

desire was to employ menial servants, all those whom I could so employ with my revenue of 10,000*l.*, or with the food and clothing which it would purchase, would be to be added to the former demand for labourers, and the addition would take place only because I chose this mode of expending my revenue."

be diminished, and the fund for the support of labour in France be increased. Not only the food, but also the manufactured articles distributable amongst the labourers in England will by this means be reduced; for it must be remembered, that a certain number of persons were employed in manufacturing articles of comfort for the remainder; so that, when the wages of the latter are reduced, they will be able to give employment to fewer manufacturers.

Now as this absentee's revenue is derived from England, and he spends it in France, it must be transmitted to him there in some form or other; and as there is a demand for more labourers in France and fewer labourers in England, it seems natural to expect that the provisions necessary for their support would be exported from England into France.

Let us see how this matter stands:—

First, let us suppose that England is in the habit of exporting provisions. In this case the absentee spending his revenue abroad will merely occasion an increased export of provisions equal to the absentee's revenue.

Suppose, on the other hand, that England does not grow sufficient food for its own consumption. It is evident that here there can be no export of provisions, as there is not enough grown in England to supply the home demand. The absentee's revenue is therefore necessarily exported in the form of manufactured articles.

But as England imports provisions, she, in return, in the ordinary course of trade, exports an equal amount of other articles to pay for them; but where these other articles are exported in payment of a debt due to the absentee, it is evident that there can be no importation of provisions to pay for them; so that, whether England exports or imports provisions, the fund for the support of labour is equally diminished.

We before alluded to the opinion of Mr. M'Culloch, that the non-residence of an absentee does not at all affect the demand for labour. We will now examine that of Mr. Senior. He states that "in a country that exports raw produce, wages may be lowered by such non-residence."*

* "Three Lectures on the Rate of Wages," p. 21.

“But when a country does *not* export raw produce, the consequences of absenteeism are very different. Those who derive their incomes from such a country cannot possibly spend them abroad until they have previously spent them at home.”

“If a proprietor of land in England (a country importing raw produce) were to remove to Paris, the remittances from England to France must be sent in the form of manufactures, either directly to France or to some country with which France has relations. And how are these manufactures to be obtained? Of course in exchange for the landlord’s rent. His share of the produce of his estates would now go to Birmingham, or Sheffield, or Manchester, or London, to maintain the labourers employed in producing manufactures to be sent and sold abroad for his profit. An English absentee employs his income precisely as if he were to remain at home and consume nothing but hardware and cottons. Instead of the services of gardeners and servants, upholsterers and tailors, he purchases those of spinners, and weavers, and cutlers. In either case, his income is employed in maintaining

labourers, though the class of labourers is different; and in either case, the whole fund for the maintenance of labourers and the number of labourers to be maintained remaining unaltered, the wages of labour would not be affected.”*

Now when these hardware and cottons are sold abroad for the benefit of the absentee, it is evident that the absentee can employ the whole of this fund for the support of French labourers. With this fund he may either directly or indirectly import corn into France for the maintenance of French labourers. But Mr. Senior states that he has already employed as many labourers in England as his funds are able to support. So that, according to this reasoning, an absentee is able to maintain exactly twice as many labourers with the same fund as a person living in the country from which his income is derived. This is clearly inconsistent with the opinion elsewhere expressed by Mr. Senior, that “ a man cannot eat his cake and have his cake.” Indeed, this gentleman appears very narrowly to have

* “ Three Lectures on the Rate of Wages,” p. 25.

missed seeing the inconsistency of this opinion, when he stated " that an absentee cannot possibly spend his income abroad until he has previously spent it at home." The difficulty appears to be in the rent being exported in the shape of manufactures. If an additional quantity of manufactures is exported, equal to the rent of the absentee, how is the expense of manufacturing these articles paid for if it be not by the rent? The answer to this is, that there are no additional manufactures exported. For the fund for the maintenance of labour in England remains precisely as it did before, minus the fund exported by the absentee. There is therefore no additional manufacture of goods of any kind, and consequently no more are exported. But the value of a portion of those that are exported is made over to the absentee in payment of his rent, and no raw produce can be imported into England in return for it. So that the payment of rent to the absentee is made by the importation into England of a smaller amount of goods, and not by an increased exportation of manufactured or other articles.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE FUND FOR THE EMPLOY-
MENT OF LABOUR.

“ His days
 Rolled heavy, dark, and unenjoyed, along :
 A waste of time ! till industry approached,
 And roused him from his miserable sloth.”
 THOMSON'S SEASONS, Autumn, v. 71.

WE have seen how the fund for the employment of labour is limited. It remains for us to trace its origin, and the manner of its increase.

In the infancy of society there may be said to be no distinct trades. Each man provides food for his family, rears his hut, and makes for himself what clothing he considers necessary. But when civilization is so far advanced that trades unconnected with agriculture make their appearance, food acquires an exchangeable value.

The cultivator of the ground will now no longer confine his exertions to the amount of food required by his own family, but will endeavour to raise a surplus, with which to purchase whatever articles the rude manufacturers of his neighbourhood can supply. The extent of farm now desirable is no longer limited by what is sufficient to raise food for the support of the agriculturist's family, but by the labour that he is able and willing to bestow. For whatever surplus he can now raise, which before would have been wasted or expended in acts of hospitality without return, he can now appropriate to his own wants and comforts. This change will therefore occasion more labour to be performed by the same number of persons.

Suppose a man to occupy such an extent of farm as to employ one-third of his time, and that the other two-thirds of his time, being spent in idleness, are lost to the community: if three such tenements are thrown into one, this will require the whole time of one man, and the other two occupants will be turned adrift upon the world, and be obliged to earn their subsis-

tence by manufacturing for the former, clothing and other articles.

By such a change in the division of land, the whole population will be employed the whole of their time, and the industry of the country consequently augmented two-thirds; at the same time that agriculture and manufactures of every description are improved by the division of labour, each man having to turn his attention to fewer objects. Now as two-thirds of the population are employed in producing the comforts and conveniences of life, the enjoyments of all will be augmented, at the same time that manufacturers, a new and distinct class, are added to the community.

Industry being now limited only by a man's strength and not by his immediate wants, it will be the interest of each agriculturist to get into his own hands as much ground as he can manage. More land will be taken into cultivation, more food raised, and consequently subsistence provided for an increased number of manufacturers. The manufacturers, on the other hand, by improving, cheapening, and inventing

various objects of artificial enjoyment, will be continually giving fresh stimulus to agricultural industry. This may be termed the first step in the progress of agriculture ; and the extent of farm most advantageous to the cultivator and to the community will be just as much as the labour of one man or one family is able to turn to account.

A change, however, takes place as soon as a little capital has accumulated, and improvements in the system of cultivation are made, and horses and many useful but expensive instruments are introduced, some of which, although sufficient for all the purposes of a large farm, are equally necessary for the proper cultivation of a small one. A plough may be required for the proper cultivation of an acre of land, and yet suffice without any additional expense for a hundred. Horses may be required by a small farmer, who may be incapable of turning one-half of their labour to account. The comparative profit, after paying the expenses of cultivation, will now be great in proportion to the size of the farm ; and this will continue to be the case until

it becomes so extensive that the farmer is unable to superintend the whole of it himself. His profits will then be diminished by the salary paid to his assistant, and by the losses that naturally occur where things are not immediately under the eye of the master. Also a portion of the gains of a farmer consists in his obtaining the principal necessities of life at a reduced expense, by living upon his farm ; which advantage is of course lost by the employment of a deputy. Land cultivated through the medium of a bailiff rarely affords much profit to the holder.

Thus, where there is a sufficient command of capital, the most profitable extent of farm will be that which will just require the constant superintendence of one man, and this without any reference to the number of acres or value of the land.

As the system of agriculture improves, a greater amount of produce is generally raised by the same number of agriculturists. If, in a rude state of agriculture, 100 quarters can be raised by a certain number of men,—in an improved state of agriculture, 200 quarters may perhaps be raised

by the labour of the same number of men. Or, in other words, the amount of agricultural produce raised generally increases faster than the number of the persons employed in producing it. Now, as the produce of agriculture is chiefly food, and as the population of a country is necessarily limited by the amount of food that can be applied to its support, where the improvements in agriculture enable a country to maintain an additional population, the increase will be chiefly among the non-agricultural portion of the community.

Thus, in England, the number of agricultural families were—

In 1811, as 34·7 in the 100

In 1821, as 33·6 in the 100

In 1831, as 27·7 in the 100

And this, not from any falling off in the number of agriculturists; for—

In 1811 they were computed at 2,012,391

In 1821 2,346,717

In 1831 2,745,386*

* Population Returns.

but by the increase of population taking place chiefly among that portion of the community not connected with agriculture.

It sometimes even happens, where a rapid and extensive alteration in the system of agriculture is taking place, that the agricultural population is diminishing, at the same time that the gross population, who are maintained by the produce of their land, are advancing with rapid strides. This change may merely occasion a portion of the agricultural population to become manufacturers. But more frequently manufacturers, establishing themselves in some limited district, give employment to the families in their immediate neighbourhood, and thus stimulate their increase, while they but little tend to alleviate the distress of the more remote peasantry.

This will appear in a stronger light where the manufacturers and agriculturists are inhabitants of distinct kingdoms. In this case, the increased surplus produce, obtained from the improved management of land, may only provide additional subsistence for the inhabitants of a foreign country ; while the means of support are

at the same time taken away from the agricultural population at home.

Thus, when any alteration in the system of agriculture, that occasions the employment of a smaller number of hands, takes place in a country exporting raw produce and importing manufactures, the effect will be distress among the poorer classes, causing perhaps a diminution of the population of the country exporting raw produce, and great abundance, with probably an increase of population, in the country importing raw produce. The population of the one country may be revelling in the enjoyment of commercial prosperity, while the other is suffering all the miseries of a people whose numbers are redundant as compared with their means of subsistence. And the country, thus distressed, may be growing a greater amount of food than its inhabitants can possibly consume ; while the other, revelling in abundance, may itself produce none at all.

It must be borne in mind that manufacturers only multiply the comforts of life, while agriculture provides the means of subsistence. So that

this interchange may, for a time, take the bread out of the mouths of the poor, while it merely augments the enjoyments of persons already possessed of wealth.

The distress above described cannot indeed be permanent, because population will, in the end, adapt itself to the means of subsistence. The permanent effect will be an increase of population to the manufacturing country, and an increase of luxuries to the agricultural country.

The state of England in the time of Henry the Eighth affords a lamentable example of a sudden change of this nature. A great demand from the manufacturing countries on the continent for English wool, had made it the interest of the landed proprietors to convert their estates, hitherto cultivated upon the cottier system, into pasture,—the former being that species of farm that affords employment to the greatest number of persons, the latter requiring the fewest ; while the increase of capital, which had been gradually taking place since the wars of the Roses, facilitated the letting of farms to persons of greater substance. Here the manufactured articles im-

ported in return merely added to the enjoyments of those already possessed of the means of living, without alleviating the distress of the ejected peasantry.

Manufactures, however, about this time began to make some progress in England. From the various immunities granted by successive sovereigns to foreign manufacturers, but more especially to the different branches of the clothing trade,—the inhabitants of cities were in a flourishing condition, while the agricultural labourers were in a state of extreme distress.* Thus a considerable portion of the corn, and other provisions that were not exported, were consumed by the inhabitants of the corporate towns in England, who formed a distinct race from the agricultural population; for every means that an ignorant legislature could discover, was resorted to, to hinder men bred to agriculture from obtaining employment in manufactures. The situation of these poor peasants, driven from their accustomed occupations, was

* Sir F. Morton Eden's "History of the Poor," vol. i. p. 29.

the more hopeless as they had then no army to enlist in, no colonies to emigrate to, little chance of employment in manufactures,—there were no poor laws* or charitable institutions to preserve them from starvation, or direct their industry; nor was there any resource left, by which an honest subsistence could be obtained. They perished by hundreds in the highways and streets; and many of those that were spared by famine, expiated on the scaffold the crimes that procured them bread. In the reign of Henry the Eighth it is said that there were executed no fewer than 72,000 criminals, or 1895 on the average each year.

Take the following specimen of the statutes affecting these wretched outcasts. It was enacted in this reign, that for the first offence a vagabond should be subject to a whipping, and be sworn to return to the place of his birth. If he should again wander, loiter, &c., he was ordered, not only to be whipped again, but to

* Collections were made in churches for the poor, but their amount appears to have been small.

have the upper part of the gristle of his right ear cut clean off. And the statute adds, that if he shall again offend, he shall suffer death as a felon.

Even during part of the reign of Elizabeth did this barbarous policy prevail. By the 39th Elizabeth, begging, if the offender was above fourteen years of age, was punished, in the first instance, by "grievous whipping and burning through the gristle of the right ear, unless some creditable person would take the beggar into his service for a year. And if a vagabond, above eighteen years old, offended a second time, he was liable to suffer death as a felon, unless some creditable person would take him into his service for two years. If he offended a third time, he was adjudged a felon. However, for the credit of humanity, this statute did not long remain in force.

Sir Thomas More thus describes the ejections of the small tenantry:—"And how shall these miserable wretches depart—men, women, husbands, wives, orphans, widows, parents with their young children. For their families were

rather numerous than wealthy, their husbandry giving employment to many hands.

“ They leave their accustomed and cherished homes, nor can they find any place of settlement. Their household goods are worth but little, even if any purchasers remained. And now that they are driven forth, their effects are sold at the lowest possible price. And when this little is consumed in their wanderings, what remains for them but to beg or steal? And then they are thrown into prison as rogues and vagabonds; for their labour, which they most eagerly offer, there is no one found to hire.”

The true cause of the melancholy condition of the labouring classes appears, however, to have been understood by the legislature of that period. The following is an extract from the Act 24th of Henry the Eighth :—“ The king’s highness, calling to his most blessed remembrance the great number of idle people daily increasing through his realme, supposeth that one great cause thereof is by the continual bringing into the same the great number of wares and merchandize brought from parts beyond the sea into this

realme, &c., by reason whereof, not only the said strange countries, where the said linnen, &c., are made, are greatly enriched, and a marvellous number of their people *set on worke*, and kept from idlenesse, to the great furtherance and advancement of their commonwealth ; but, also, contrariwise, the inhabitants and subjects of this realme, *for lack of the like policy* and industry, &c., now live in idleness and otiosity, to the high displeasure of Almighty God, great diminution of the king's people, and extreme ruin, decay, and impoverishment of this realme."

In the preamble to the 4th of Henry the Seventh, we find a more minute description of the effects of the consolidation of small farms. "The king remembreth that great inconveniences daily do increase, desolation and pulling downe and wilful waste of houses and tounes,* (i. e. country villages) within this realme, and

* The word *toune*, which is here interpreted to mean country villages, originally signified inclosures, or ground inclosed, and was even at one time used in contradistinction to cities. Thus, in the Anglo-Saxon version of St. Luke, chapter 15, verse 15: "he sent him into his fields to feed

laying to pasture lands, which customably have been used in tillage, whereby idleness, which is the ground and beginning of all mischiefes, daily doth increase. For where, in some tounes, 200 persons were occupied, and lived by their lawful labours, now there are occupied two or three herdsmen, and the residue fall into idlenesse, &c."

The legislature thus observing the rapid destruction of small farms, ignorant alike of its cause and of its ultimate effects, but seeing the distress to which a large portion of the agricultural peasantry were reduced, to remedy the evil had recourse to direct prohibition, the usual expedient of inexperienced lawgivers. Statute after statute was passed forbidding the peasantry of the country from seeking employment among the manufacturers of the cities ; also dictating the manner in which land should be cultivated : such as the act prohibiting " the pulling down

swine"—" He sende hym tó hys túne." Joseph of Arimathea is also described as coming up out of the " túne." At the period alluded to in the text, it probably signified country villages ; for the cities or borough towns were at this time in a very flourishing condition.

of farms houses, to which at least twenty acres of land lying in tillage and husbandrie were annexed." Farms containing twenty acres of arable land were directed to be kept in tillage for the future. The language of these statutes is a clear proof that the business of agriculture began now to be carried on by persons of capital. For a century and a half after this period, depopulation continued the theme of the legislature, and enclosures and large farms were prohibited under severe penalties. From the frequency of these laws, Mr. Hume very justly infers, that none of them were executed.*

These changes, although distressing to numbers, were not however so generally injurious as the language of the legislature of that time would imply. Harrison, a writer of that period, after describing the poverty of the former generation of farmers, continues :—" Whereas in my time, although peradventure 4*l.* of old rent be improved to 40*l.*, 50*l.*, or even 100*l.*, yet will the

* Vide Sir Frederick Morton Eden's "History of the Poor," vol. i. p. 73.

farmer, as another palme or date tree, think his gains very small towards the end of his terme if he have not six or seven years' rent lieing by him," &c.* It should be borne in mind that this additional surplus produce was either directly or indirectly applied to the support of manufacturers employed in multiplying the comforts of life. It therefore appears, that in England, during this period, the alteration in the average extent of arable land, and the improvements in agriculture, while they reduced a considerable portion of the peasantry to great distress, augmented the revenue of the landlord, improved the circumstances of those tenants that remained, and the comforts of the community at large.

In Scotland, also, of late years, the engrossment of farms, and the alterations in the system of agriculture, has been so rapid as to bring much distress upon the peasantry of that country. The improvements in roads and bridges has so increased the facility of communication, and thus opened a more extensive, constant, and better market for the produce, and has so attracted to

* "Description of England."

the Highlands the great capitalist, to the expulsion of the ancient race of small farmers, by hundreds and by thousands,—that a considerable portion of the lower districts of the Highlands is already rented as summer pasture for the farmer, grazier, and cattle dealer of the adjacent Lowlands, who manages, by means of a single shepherd, a tract of ground which formerly contained 20 or 30 families of little farmers. The landlords, by this arrangement, have their rent paid in one sum, without trouble in the collection; and as they naturally prefer tenants with commanding capitals, from whom superior improvements are expected, however we may regret the hardships to which the old race are exposed, it is impossible to resist the conclusion, that where the causes of depopulation are laid so deep, the effect must sooner or later follow.*

Much of the distress in Ireland may be traced to the sudden and violent manner in which the size of farms is often augmented, by the conversion of cottage tenements at once into farms of considerable magnitude. Sometimes as much

* "A Tour in the Highlands," *passim*.

as nine-tenths of the families that obtained their whole support from agricultural labour, and are incapable of following any other trade or occupation, are turned adrift upon the world, to wander about, without a home and without friends, until disease or want puts a termination to their existence. The circumstances of this country are however peculiar. The general absence of the owners of the soil, the legitimate guardians of the poor,—the custom of long leases with the right of sub-letting,—the facilities and temptations to the sub-division of farms by tenants and sub-tenants,—with the increase of capital, and the great vent for agricultural produce opened by steam navigation,—have made it the interest of the landlords, on the expiration of a lease, to eject their small tenants, and to let their land in larger divisions to persons of substance.

These changes however in the system of agriculture are not necessarily attended by distress to any portion of the community ; if they take place gradually, the redundant numbers of the agriculturists are quietly absorbed in the popu-

lation of the towns. The peasant apprentices his son to a tradesman instead of sending him to the plough.

Distress occasioned by changes in the system of agriculture appears to become less frequent as the cultivation of the soil is improved by repeated applications of capital and science. A farmer in England at the present time, applying capital to the improvement of his farm, will on the average increase the labour in some departments of his farm to an extent at least equal to the labour saved by the introduction of machinery and contrivances for economizing labour in other departments, so that the effect of his improvements will be seen in the increase of his produce without any material alteration, one way or the other, in the number of men he employs.

Thus, improvements in the system of agriculture occasion not only an increase of the gross amount of agricultural produce, but an increase of that produce as compared with the number of persons employed in raising it. Now the surplus produce of the land that remains after providing subsistence for those who raise it,

limits, and to a certain extent regulates, the numbers employed in producing the comforts and conveniences of life.

In point of fact, however, the amount of manufactures produced increases far more rapidly than the numbers of the non-agricultural population; for although a considerable proportion of the non-agricultural population produce nothing, the continual inventions in machinery, and in improved processes of manufacture, make the amount of articles manufactured to increase much faster than the population employed in producing them. If the whole population of Great Britain was to be employed in the manufacture of cotton goods, according to the system of fifty years ago, they would not be able to produce as much as the present number of manufacturers working according to the improved system.

Thus in the rudest condition of mankind, each labours only for himself, and wages have no existence. But when a surplus is obtained from the land beyond the wants of its cultivators, a

maintenance is provided for those who supply the wants and provide for the comforts of others, and a foundation is laid for the superstructure of civilized society. As this surplus augments, so does civilization advance.

And though in its progress, by sudden alterations, it sometimes occasions intense though transitory distress, its permanent effects are uniformly beneficial.

It is not here intended to assert, that every rude society goes through this process of improvement, but merely that those which are civilized have at one time or other followed such a course.

Those countries that first boasted of wealth and knowledge possessed a luxuriant soil, where such a surplus was easiest obtained,—the banks of the Euphrates, and the valley of the Nile; while the nomade tribes of the desert continue nearly in the same condition as at first. But the characters of particular peoples,* or of their

* Examples :—The Dutch, English, and Americans.

rulers,* accidents,† or necessities,‡ have often guided the progress of improvement through a more eccentric course. Abundance has been raised from a niggard soil, while fertile districts still remain a wilderness.

* The Czar Peter.

† "The Cherokees and Creeks, tribes of American Indians, being *surrounded* by Europeans, could not retreat before them, like their northern brethren, but they have been gradually enclosed within narrower limits, like the game within the thicket before the huntsmen plunge into the interior. The Indians who were thus placed between civilization and death, found themselves obliged to live by ignominious labour, like the whites."—(De Tocqueville—, "Democracy in America," vol. ii. p. 300.)

‡ "The forced emigration of the Puritans to North America.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE EFFECTS OF CIVILIZATION UPON THE
HEALTH, LONGEVITY, AND INCREASE OF
MANKIND.

“ All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players :
They have their exits, and their entrances.”

As YOU LIKE IT, Act II. Sc. VII.

IF, as civilization advances, a greater amount of comforts and conveniences are diffused among a population, it seems natural to expect that some alteration will be effected in their general health and longevity. We find accordingly that the life of man has been sensibly lengthened since linen clothing has been substituted for woollen, since more attention has been paid to cleanliness, and more enlightened cares bestowed upon infancy, since men have learned to prevent the invasion or effect the cure of diseases for-

merly beyond human art.* The plague,† small-pox, and fever no longer spread the same terror and destruction. The plague appears to be at present confined to the filthy cities of the Mahometans. “The yellow fever has ceased to appear in New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, since 1803, and the inhabitants are under no apprehension for the future.”‡

Famines in all civilized countries have become more rare, less general, and less destructive.

In the fourteenth century, the black plague for the space of thirty years spread its ravages through all the countries of the world then known. In Russia, Poland, Germany, Sweden, the Low Countries, Great Britain, France, Swit-

* Dr. Granville—“Treat., Mid.”

† Sir William Petty—“Political Arithmetick,” p. 31.—“It is to be remembered that, one year with another, a plague happeneth in London once in twenty years or thereabouts: for in the last hundred years, between the years 1582 and 1682, there have been five great plagues—viz., anno 1592, 1603, 1625, 1636, and 1665. And it is also to be remembered that the plagues of London do commonly kill one-fifth part of the inhabitants.”

‡ Seybert—“Statistical Annals of the United States of America,” p. 48.

zerland, Italy, we are told that it destroyed from a fifth to a third of their inhabitants ; and in many countries, as much as one-half of the population. The inhabitants, indeed, of some districts were reduced to less than a fourth of their former number. Some large towns, such as, for instance, Smolensko, one of the most populous of that period, were left almost without inhabitants. The dreadful epidemic of 1709 and 1710, principally occasioned by famine, was much less destructive. Since these two fearful scourges we have seen nothing similar in our climates. By a system of cultivation more varied in its products, and less liable to failure, the price of food is subject to less variation.

It is certainly owing to the progress of civilization that we no longer witness the excessive mortalities of former times, for we everywhere find that epidemics diminish in frequency and in intensity in proportion as the people they attack are removed from barbarism.

If we take the history of one epidemic, the small-pox, for example, it will be sufficient to shew the happy influence of civilization.

According to the account of Mons. Lesseps, a French traveller in Kamtschatka, in 1767 and 1768, three-fourths of the natives were destroyed by the small-pox. We are informed that the same disease made such ravages among the Indians of America towards 1520, that they have made it a fixed epoch from which they date to distinguish the years, as from the most fatal and extraordinary event that has ever arrived. Among what civilized nations has the small-pox ever occasioned so much evil? Among the most civilized nations of Europe it is calculated that about a seventieth part of those who *take* the infection die.

At Viareggio, in Tuscany, the inhabitants, few in number, and in a wretched state of misery and barbarism, were, from time immemorial, each year, at the same season, attacked by an intermittent fever. But in 1741 the neighbouring marshes were effectually drained, since which time the fever has ceased to reappear, and Viareggio is at the present time one of the healthiest and richest places on the coast of Tuscany. Thus the trifling expenditure of capital, aided

by science, that effected the draining of the marsh, has added many years of health and enjoyment to the inhabitants of Viareggio.*

Dr. Villermé asserts, as the result of his observations, that epidemics are more general and more destructive in the country than in towns, and he attributes this fact to civilization being further advanced in towns than in the country. According to Dr. Short, who wrote in 1750, epidemics in England were more than twice as destructive in the country as in London and other large towns.

M. Chabrol, in his introduction to the "*Recherches Statistiques*," &c. of 1823,† observes, "that in proportion as useful knowledge has been disseminated, and has influenced the acts of the public administration, great mortalities in Paris have become more rare. It has established a more uniform order in the series of annual deaths; the changes are not so sudden as they

* The above account of epidemics is taken from Dr. Villermé—*Des Epidemies*, "*Annales d'Hygiène*," vol. ix. part 2.

† "New Observations on City, Town, and Country Bills of Mortality," p. 101.

formerly were. Towards the beginning of the eighteenth century the annual number of deaths changed in the short interval of eight years from 13,000 to 29,000. Rigorous winters, scarcities, epidemics, the want of proper care and the application of proper remedies, the insalubrity of hospitals and habitations, produced at that time rapid and lamentable effects. More enlightened and humane views have since directed the administration of public relief. The dispositions of men's minds, and the progress of industry, have effected most happy changes. The number of annual deaths, always variable, as they are affected by a great variety of causes, has approached nearer to its mean value, which mean value has been progressively augmenting.

Most, if not all, contagious diseases, those great scourges of the human race, appear originally to have broken out among barbarous nations. The plague came from degenerated Egypt; or, perhaps, from the savage hordes in the interior of Africa. The small-pox and the measles came from Arabia. The syphilis and the yellow fever from the American tribes; but as they come in

contact with civilized nations, they are either softened down, or altogether disappear.*

Robertson believes life to be shorter among savage than among civilized nations. Raynal says, that among the Canadian tribes he scarcely ever met with an old man. Cook and La Perouse made the same observation on the north-west coast of America. Mungo Park found longevity very rare among the negroes. Bruce made the same observation with regard to the Abyssinians.

The various comforts and advantages enjoyed by the inhabitants of modern England, and which were unknown to the ancient Romans, would induce us to suppose the expectation of life to be higher with us than with them. As far as we have the means of comparison, such appears to be the fact.

The earliest authority that we have upon Roman statistics, is Domitius Ulpianus, minister of Alexander Severus. According to him, registers of population, age, sex, and disease,

* M. Berard—"Discours sur les Améliorations progressive de la Santé public par l'Influence de la Civilisation," p. 107.

were kept with exactness under the emperors. These registers, however, include only free citizens, and take no note of the slave population ; they must, therefore, be considered as relating to a certain extent to picked lives, and not to the general mass of society. By observations drawn from these registers, the expectation of life to the Roman citizens has been fixed at thirty years. Now the expectation of life in England, according to calculations made from the tontines and other life annuities granted by the English government, is calculated at above fifty years, which gives them an advantage of above twenty years above the Roman citizen. These nominees of government life annuities may probably be considered as select lives to about the same extent as the Roman citizens.*

There appears to have been a considerable improvement in the expectation of life in England. Mr. Finlaison, actuary of the national debt, considers the average duration of life now, compared with what it was a hundred years ago, to be as four to three, in round numbers.

* Dr. Hawkins—" Medical Statistics."

Mr. Glenny, before a committee of the House of Commons, observed, that during the last twenty years so many more children had been reared, that in trying to form a table to provide something for them during their minority, he had been comparatively baffled by the difference of life in children of late years ; so that he had to go over the same ground again. He was of opinion that the lives of children had increased a fifth, at least, within his own experience.

In Paris, on the average of the five years—1817, 1818, 1819, 1820, 1821, there was one death to 36,44 inhabitants. On the average of the five preceding years, there was one death to 32,43 inhabitants.* In the 17th century it was calculated at one in 25 or 26, and in the 14th century it was supposed to have been about one in 16 or 17. The statistical records of the other countries in Europe all shew an apparent diminution of mortality.

It should be here observed, that when a dimi-

* “ Recherches Statistiques de la Ville de Paris et le Departement de la Seine.”

nution of mortality, or an extension of the average duration of life is spoken of, it does not mean that individuals live to a greater age, but that a greater portion of the population arrive at an advanced period of life. Indeed, the probabilities of life to those advanced in years appears to be little affected by the state of civilization ; the diminution of mortality being most apparent among those in the early and middle periods of life.

The prolongation of the average duration of life, must be considered as a strong evidence of the happiness enjoyed by the population among which it takes place. A man who dies early may indeed live happily ; but it appears necessary for a person who lives to an advanced age, to enjoy good health and a tranquil mind. If we turn our eyes to those who have been borne down by some overwhelming misfortune, how soon disease fixes upon their sensible frame, and death claims them for his own. Dr. Villermé has shewn that the mortality of prisons is more than twice greater than the general average.

If the additional comforts introduced by an advance of civilization, which tend to diminish the chances of sickness, and to extend the average duration of life, multiply as the numbers of the population are augmented, it is certain that the general rate of increase cannot be regulated by the difficulty of procuring food. For if this were the case, in proportion as the diffusion of comforts, by diminishing mortality, augmented the numbers of one portion of the population, distress, produced by a deficiency of food, must be to an equal extent thinning some other portion of the community ; for improved comforts, though they may multiply the number of mouths, do not provide the means for their support.

But the fact is, that the general diffusion of comfort reduces the average mortality of the *whole* population : so that unless the rate of increase of population be regulated by some other means, it will become more rapid as civilization advances. Suppose that, in a country of limited extent, manufactures, agriculture, and population increase in the manner before

described; then, at the moment that the last acre shall have been cultivated in the best manner that the knowledge of the age will admit of, the rate of increase of population will be the most rapid;—that is, at the time that an increase of population is least wanted, the tendency to increase will be the strongest.

It need hardly be observed, that the fact is directly the reverse, population generally increasing at a slower rate as a country becomes more densely occupied. Thus, between 1801 and 1811, while the population of England was increasing only at the rate of 14 per cent., the population of the United States was increasing at the rate of 36 per cent.*

* A comparison between the increase of population in the several counties of England, at first sight, seems to prove the reverse; for the increase of the population in each county appears to be rapid as its population is dense. This, however, is easily explained. It was shewn in a former chapter, that the increase in the surplus produce from land affords support to a constantly increasing proportion of persons employed in manufactures, and unconnected with the land. Now, as those parts of England that have the densest population are chiefly manufacturing, and those that have the thinnest population are chiefly agricultural,

The rate of increase of a population appears ever to correspond with the increased facility of procuring subsistence. If the hunter tribes of America were small as compared with the extent of country that they occupied, or, rather, wandered over, their population was very great as compared with their actual means of subsistence. Their numbers seem to have remained about stationary for many centuries, and to have been

it is natural to expect that the counties containing the densest population would shew the most rapid increase. This will be seen more clearly, if we class the counties according as they are agricultural or manufacturing. Thus, since 1801, the nineteen most agricultural counties, (Rutland, York (North Riding), Hereford, Wilts, Westmoreland, Berks, Northampton, Buckingham, Dorset, Oxford, Suffolk, Huntingdon, Northumberland, Norfolk, Devon, Essex, Bedford, Lincoln, and Cambridge,) increased at the rate of 396 upon the 1000.

Thirteen counties, partly agricultural and partly manufacturing, (Southampton, Cumberland, Hertford, Derby, Somerset, Leicester, York (East Riding and City), Kent, Gloucester, Cornwall, Middlesex, Sussex, and Surrey,) increased at the rate of 584 upon the 1000.

The ten counties whose population is chiefly manufacturing, (Salop, Worcester, Durham, Nottingham, Warwick, Stafford, York (West Riding), Chester, Lancaster, and Monmouth,) increased at the rate of 741 upon the 1000.—(Marshall—"Statistics of the Metropolis," &c.)

limited by the absolute impossibility of obtaining food for more. But when European emigrants settled in the same countries, bringing with them the knowledge and habits of civilized nations, the rapidity of their increase became truly astonishing.

Modern England affords a curious instance of a country with a population whose rate of increase has become more rapid as the land became more densely occupied. The absolute increase of population in Great Britain, (estimated by doubling the number of females,) appears to have been about a million and a half between 1801 and 1811, two millions between 1811 and 1821, and two millions and a quarter between 1821 and 1831. The rate of increase being 14·15 per cent. in the first period, 15·71 per cent. in the second period, and 15·45 per cent. in the third ;*—shewing not only that the population had rapidly increased, but that between 1811 and 1821, the capital, science, and industry had made such advances as to cause the rate of

* Population Return, 1831, p. xix.

increase of population to become more rapid as the country was more densely occupied.

The general rule, however, appears to be, that as a country becomes more densely occupied, the rate of increase of population is retarded. Mr. Sadler went so far as to affirm, that "the law of population by which the increase of mankind has been and still is *in all cases regulated*, is simply this :—THE FECUNDITY OF HUMAN BEINGS, UNDER EQUAL CIRCUMSTANCES, VARIES INVERSELY AS THEIR NUMBERS IN A GIVEN SPACE."*

The exceptions to this rule in the hunter tribes of America, which do not increase at all, and in modern England, which has accelerated its rate of increase, would prevent this law of population, if true, (however these particular instances may be explained,) from being of much practical utility.

It is impossible to conceive how the number of children in a person's family, or the probable duration of one's life, can be affected by the

* "Ireland, its Evils, and their Remedies," Introduction, p. xx.

number of people residing in the neighbourhood. This law of population, besides, would not be a means of adapting the numbers of a population to the supply of food ; for the amount of food is not most abundant in a thinly inhabited country, but where the land is most fertile, and where most skill and industry are applied to its cultivation. The above passage was only quoted to shew that the rule was so general as to be by some believed to be a law of Nature.

If therefore, in the ordinary progress of society, as a population becomes more dense, the rate of human increase is retarded, at the same time that the diffusion of comforts enables a greater proportion of children to be reared, and extends the average duration of life to persons of all ages,—causes which tend to quicken the rate of increase,—it follows of necessity that there must exist somewhere a cause which retards the rate of increase in a greater proportion than the diminution of mortality quickens it.

It is difficult to imagine where this cause can be found, unless it be in a reduced number of births ; but if the number of births should dimi-

nish as additional health and longevity is conferred upon the population, the happiness of the whole population might by this means be enhanced, and no counterbalancing distress entailed upon any portion of the community.

Now, so exactly is this supposition in agreement with experience, that wherever we find a population with a diminishing mortality, we may conclude with tolerable certainty, that there is a falling off in the number of births, and the reverse.

M. Chabrol, speaking of the Statistics of Paris, observes, that “ it is very remarkable that the immediate effect of the suppression of a cause of mortality is rather to diminish than to increase the number of births.”*

If we take the population of Paris and the department of the Seine for two periods of five years,—1817, 1818, 1819, 1820, and 1821, being the first period, and 1822, 1823, 1824, 1825, and 1826 the second period,—the following are the results:—

* “ *Recherches Statistiques sur la Ville de Paris*,” Vol. I. p. 59.

	Births to Population, one in	Marriages to Population, one in	Deaths to Population, one in	Births to Marriages, one in	Still Born, to 100 births
1st Period,	28	108	32,43	2,40	56
2d Period,	30	118	36,44	2,41	58*

From this table it appears that the same change in the condition of society that occasioned a reduction of mortality, occasioned at the same time a reduction in the number of births. It is curious also to observe the increased proportion of children that are born quick, shewing a diminution of mortality even before birth.

A precisely similar process appears to be going on at present in England.

Mons. Chabrol, speaking of the population of Paris, and the department of the Seine,† observes, “ that in the thirty last years of the 17th century, from 1670 to 1700, the proportion of the number of births to the number of marriages was about 4 4-5ths ; to five marriages there were twenty-four births. This proportion has been constantly diminishing: it was 4 2-5ths from 1710 to 1750 ; 4 1-10th from 1750 to the beginning of 1790 ; and since that time it has be-

* “ Recherches Statistiques,” &c. 1829, Tableau 68.

† “ Recherches Statistiques,” &c. 1823, Introduction, p. xxii.

come about 4 less 1-10th. We should find this diminution more striking if only children born in wedlock were included in the number of births, and so the calculation ought to have been made, if we would ascertain the number of births to a marriage ; but the elements for such a calculation are not to be found in the published tables.

“ This constant diminution of the number of births, as compared with the number of marriages, shews that the proportion of the total population to the annual number of births has undergone a considerable change ; for the relative number of births ought to diminish in the same proportion as the fecundity of marriages. There is some uncertainty in the results of this calculation, for they must also depend upon the changes that take place in the relative number of marriages. But we must consider it as very probable that, since 1700, the relative number of births has diminished about one-eighth ; so that, if the birth of a child in the present year supposes the existence of 34 or 35 inhabitants, they calculated a century ago one birth to 30 or 29 inhabitants.”

“With regard to the relative number of deaths, it has diminished, as well as the relative number of births ; and the ratio of mortality has become more constant.”

Now if the dissemination of comfort occasions a diminution in the number of deaths on the one hand, and of marriages and births on the other, it is natural to suppose that, among the wealthier classes of society, there will be less mortality and fewer births ; and that, among the poorer classes, there will be greater mortality and a greater proportion of births.

M. Villermé has ascertained, that in France the mortality increases amongst the poor and diminishes to the affluent. In the wealthy departments of France, life is, on the average, protracted twelve years and a half beyond its course in those which are poor. The least mortality occurs in the districts where ease and happiness are most common, as in the departments of the Calvados de l'Orme and de la Sarthe. In these, scarcely one-fourth of a given number of individuals die before five years of age ; one-half die

at 45 ; three-fourths are dead at 70. In the two poor departments of l'Indre and le Cher, one-fourth before completing the first year ; one-half between 15 and 20 ; three-fourths at 50, in one department, and before 55 in the other.

If we take the two arrondissements of Paris, the first where the rich are in the highest proportion, and the twelfth where there are most poor, it is calculated * that there are 100 deaths in the poor arrondissement where there are 50 in the rich arrondissement ; there is one annual birth to above 32 inhabitants of the rich arrondissement, and above one to 26 of the poor arrondissement ; and, notwithstanding, there are not in proportion more children from 0 to 5 years of age in the one than in the other, because, although the poor produce more children, they do not nourish them so well.

“ According to the calculations of Drs. Gordini and Orsini,† the average annual births of the entire population of Leghorn, between 1818 and 1825, was one in 25 or 26, and their average

* M. Villermé.

† “ *Richerche di Statistica medica della Cetta di Livorno.* ”

mortality about one in 37 ; but of the non-catholic portion of the population composed of Protestants and Jews, comparatively an affluent body, the annual births were one in 38 or 39, and the mortality only one in 48 or 49.”*

Adam Smith observes, that “ a half-starved Highland woman frequently has more than twenty children, while a pampered fine lady of fashion is often incapable of bearing any, and is frequently exhausted by two or three. Barrenness, so frequent among women of fashion, is very rare among those of inferior station.”†
 “ *Fecunda virorum paupertas.*”‡

Now, as countries advancing in civilization have generally a constantly diminishing rate of increase, occasioned by a smaller proportionate number of births, and as the proportionate number of births appears to diminish as persons are elevated in the scale of society, one is naturally led to suspect that the higher orders do not reproduce their numbers.

If we look through the different grades of

* Medical Statistics.

† Wealth of Nations.

‡ Lucan.

society, with the exception of the lowest, we shall find, that, in the majority of instances, the individuals who compose them derive their origin from families of a station below that which they at present hold. Take the higher branches of trade, those to which the titled and landed aristocracy would naturally first resort as professions for their younger children. Do we find these employments, in general, held by what are termed persons of family, or by the sons of those whose talents and industry have raised them to their present condition? There is a prejudice which has descended to us from the feudal times, that it is derogatory for the noble and high-born to engage in trade—a prejudice which, it is to be hoped, is wearing away, and which nothing but the small necessity of providing for a redundant offspring could have so long preserved. The greater portion of the older families of the aristocracy have, for generations, been able to support the whole of their members, either upon independent fortunes, or by sending them into two or three favoured professions,—such as, the army, the navy, and

the church ; and such of them as enter these professions usually possess some private fortune, independent of what they receive from their professions. Now, not only are the number of these limited by the appointments these professions contain, but by far the greater number of the persons who enter them are unrelated to, and unconnected with, the great families of the aristocracy.

If, therefore, the families of the wealthy are redundant, what becomes of their superabundance ?

The only answer that can be given is, that there is no superabundance. Blot out from the list of peers those whose ancestors have risen from the commercial and lower classes, and the House of Lords would be nearly emptied. The peerage depends upon the promotion of commoners to its rank to fill up the vacancies that become extinct ; and thus it is indebted to the inferior classes for the very existence of its order. Do we find, in any country, the families of royal blood multiplying so fast as to become a serious burden to the state ?

The occupations and prejudices engendered by wealth, and the complicated relations of civilized society, induce many to marry late, or to remain in a single state. In all classes above those that depend upon their bodily labour for subsistence, it is not the difficulty of maintaining a family in the common necessities of life that deters from marriage, but the fear of descending a grade in society—of not being able to afford the conveniences and luxuries that are enjoyed by others in the same walk of life. It has been well observed,* that there are comparatively more marriages prevented by inability to support an equipage, or entertain guests with expensive wines, than by doubts of ability to procure blankets and bread. Among the great we find pride, under various forms, continually obstructing those unions which similarity of tastes and character would naturally have produced. We have the pride of family—of wealth—of fashion, besides a thousand whims and fancies that enter not into the consideration of the poor. Whether

* Mr. Graham.

a woman in the higher stations of life marry a man who has risen in the world by his industry and genius, or one upon whom honours have descended through a long line of ancestors, is matter of serious consideration. As, however, we pass into the lower stages of life, we find the gradations of society less accurately defined, and less importance attached to their distinctions. Among the labouring classes, if a man take a liking to a woman, and his person and character are not objectionable, a match usually takes place. They trouble themselves little about distinctions of birth or profession, and often not much about the probable expenses of a future family; while too often they fall from their present station to one in which they must depend upon parish allowance or casual charity is so small as to occasion no serious alarm. But take the class immediately above—those to whom the receipt of alms would be a reproach,—and we shall find pride beginning to operate, and, as we rise through the different gradations of society, continually to increase in power.

But the diminution in the number of marriages

among the wealthy and easy classes is not the sole, and probably not the principal, cause of their numbers increasing less rapidly than the poorer and more laborious portion of the community; for wherever the diffusion of comfort, and the progress of refinement, has occasioned a smaller proportion of marriages to take place, it appears ever to have occasioned a still further reduction in the number of births: so that one is naturally led to infer, that the marriages that do take place among the wealthy are less prolific than those which take place among the labouring classes. But in the absence of any extensive and authenticated collection of facts, it is difficult to ascertain the relative agency of these two causes. The condition of the aristocracy of England is calculated to throw little light upon this subject,—the law and custom of primogeniture presenting difficulties in the way of marriage among the younger branches of a family, and the numerous unions that take place between members of the aristocracy and the families of those who have raised themselves from the inferior classes, would prevent the unprolificness

of an ancient aristocracy from being fully developed. If, however, we could find an instance in which the property of an aristocracy that did not intermarry with the rest of the people was equally inherited by all the children, we should obtain some farther insight into this matter.

Such appears to have been the condition of the old nobility of Poland—now, alas ! no more. The ancient law of Poland not only divided the inheritance equally among all the sons, but gave a son, after coming of age, certain rights over that portion of the property that was to fall to his share, even during the lifetime of the father.* Yet, under the operation of this law, the estates of the nobility kept gradually and constantly augmenting in size, till at length they rather resembled the territories of sovereign princes than the properties of individuals. The properties of the patrician families of Rome were divided among the children ; yet here wealth

* Malte Brun—"Tableau de la Pologne," vol. ii., pp. 264, 301.

accumulated in few hands. But in France, Holland, and Belgium, where there is a constant infusion of fresh blood from the industrious classes, similar laws of inheritance have caused a rapid diminution in the size of properties.

The law of increase among mankind does not appear to differ in principle from that which prevails among the rest of the animal and even vegetable world. Animals in a wild state have a tendency to rapid increase, but are kept within the necessary bounds of subsistence by accidents, epidemic diseases, and the ravages of beasts of prey. It is, however, a well-known fact, that creatures pampered and highly fed are less prolific than their more hardy neighbours. A similar rule appears to hold good with regard to vegetables. Flowers planted in too rich a soil have a tendency to blow double, and to produce little or no seed. Wheat sown in rank ground will throw up a great deal of straw, with a deficiency of grain. But with both animals and vegetables, their numbers may be said to be practically limited by want of nourishment and want of space, and not by the luxuriousness of their nourishment,

and it is worthy of remark, that as men, through barbarism, approach the condition of brute animals, so is their species governed by similar rules ; as they are raised above them by civilization, so is their state more happy, and Nature regulates them by milder laws.

At first sight it does appear extraordinary that those who enjoy wealth, comforts, and conveniences of every description, who may marry with little chance of their families experiencing poverty, who are never obliged to have recourse to inferior kinds of food, or insalubrious modes of life, who can afford to consult the most able physicians, who may travel great distances for change of air or more genial climates, should be the less prolific members of the community ; while the poor, who spend their days in unceasing toil and constant hardship, whose food is coarse and frequently unwholesome, who cannot marry without a probability of their families being reduced to misery, are the more prolific portion of society.

An inattentive observer might consider these facts improbable, or, being convinced of their

truth, might think them exceptions to the benevolence of Providence ; yet they appear to have contributed more than any other cause to the happiness of mankind.

The gradual diminution of the numbers of the higher orders, without lessening their own enjoyment, leaves an access to wealth and honours open to all beneath them. Thus, every man, by his own exertions, may hope to elevate himself to a station above that in which he was born. The son may raise himself another step. By this means are the ranks of the aristocracy recruited. A generation or two may place a family among the wealthy ; again, a generation or two, and they are perhaps among the noble and great. There are also many who, during their own short lives, have reached the highest summit of their ambition, and whose fortunes have been changed from the lowest condition to the enjoyment of all the superfluities of wealth.

While the lives of all are gilded with the hopes of future advancement in whatever may be the particular bent of their desires,—and perhaps this constant prospect of future prosperity,

faint and delusive as it may appear, is, in fact, the greatest blessing that man is capable of enjoying. There is no feeling that cheers a man in his journey through life like the consciousness that he is rising in the world. Every trifling advance, that brings him nearer to the object of his wishes, is a source of joy and exultation ; while all the labour and time it has cost him is at once and for ever forgotten.

Let us for a moment suppose the reverse of this to be the fact, and the rich to be the redundant classes, from which the deficiencies among the poor are to be supplied. Observe the result. Instead of this world being a world of hope, it would become one of despondency ; instead of a man striving to raise himself in it by his industry, he would live only fearful of falling lower ; and fancy, which paints the stations of wealth and authority that lie above us of too bright a hue, exaggerates in like manner the miseries of poverty. The necessary business of this world would be gone through in the languor of despondency, if not in the bitterness of disappointment. Children nursed in luxury would live to

labour, while those born to labour would live to beg, to seek charity from others whose means were found insufficient for the support of their own families. Wretched indeed would be the existence of those who found themselves driven back, step by step, from every object of their hope, love, or ambition.

The advance of civilization, therefore, diminishes the chance of sickness, and extends the average duration of life, and occasions the amount of population to be more and more regulated and restrained within the limits of its means of subsistence, by the diffusion of wealth and comforts, and less by misery, privation, and disease, among the poor.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE AMOUNT OF POPULATION IS ADAPTED
TO THE VARIATIONS IN THE FUND FOR THEIR
SUPPORT.

“ Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play :
For some must watch, while some must sleep ;
Thus runs the world away.”

HAMLET, Act III., Scene II.

It has been before shewn how, in the ordinary progress of society, with every advance of population, the unprolific classes gradually include a larger portion of the community ; and thus the rate of increase is retarded, as the funds for their support becomes straightened.

But the extent of the wealthier classes is regulated solely by the state of civilization, while the amount of population is necessarily limited by the supply of available food. Now

there being no immediate connexion between the state of civilization and the supply of available food, it is evident that any temporary change in either must derange their mutual relation.

Take the case in which one-fifth of a civilized nation is destroyed by a pestilence. Here the amount of wealth in the country continues the same, while only four-fifths of the population remain to enjoy it. The various articles of luxury and comfort to be distributed to each of the survivors will be augmented one-fifth. Jackson, in his account of Morocco, describing the effect of the plague, observes, that "men who before the pestilence were common labourers, immediately after it found themselves possessed of thousands, keeping horses without knowing how to ride them." Just after the great pestilence in the reign of Edward the Third, a day's labour would purchase a bushel of wheat, while just before, it would hardly have purchased a peck. Thus, by such a sudden reduction in the numbers of the population the proportion of those living in ease and plenty would be greater :

and if the increase of mankind were solely regulated by the state of civilization, the following results might be expected:—namely ; after the thinning of the population by the pestilence, the proportion of the unprolific classes would be augmented, and instead of an accelerated rate of increase to fill up the void, a further diminution would be induced ; which effect, in like manner, becoming a cause, might again reduce the population, and thus the numbers of the people might continue to fall off, until they became extinct, or reduced to a few individuals.

The reverse of this is, however, known to take place, a very rapid increase universally following a great mortality.

Some other cause must therefore exist, which more immediately adapts the amount of population to its means of subsistence.

In every country at all advanced in civilization, there are two distinct causes of unprolificness, (understanding by the word prolificness the power of rearing children so as to increase the numbers of the population.) The first is found in the small proportion of births. This cause of un-

prolificness is the strongest amongst the higher orders, and diminishes in power as we descend towards the lower orders.

The second cause of unprolificness is the difficulty of rearing children, and a greater general mortality amongst persons of all ages. This cause is strongest amongst the poor, and diminishes in power as we ascend towards the higher orders.

A civilized community may thus be divided into three classes :—

First—Those who are unprolific from deficiency of births.

Second—Those whose numbers increase.

Third—Those who are unprolific from the small proportion of children that are reared, and the greater general mortality among persons of all ages. *Extreme* distress will also diminish the number of births. The rate at which a population increases depends of course upon the proportion that the unprolific classes bear to the prolific. But in proportion as the civilization of a country is advanced, population is restrained from undue increase, more by the unprolificness

of the higher orders, and less by the unprolific-
ness of the poor.

But it does not appear to be possible that
civilization can ever so far advance as to prevent
the circumstances of the poorer classes from
undergoing such fluctuations as would stimulate
or retard their rate of increase.

It is this variableness in the condition of the
lower classes that gives, as it were, the elasti-
city to population, and enables it to fill up any
void that may be made in its numbers, or to
reduce their amount when superabundant. Thus
when increased means of support are afforded to
the population, those who before, from want of
employment, or inadequate remuneration, were
living ill-clothed, ill-fed, in poverty and in filth,
who, unprolific themselves, were only able to
maintain their numbers by the distress that re-
duced others down to their level, are at once
converted into well-paid labourers, in the enjoy-
ment of the principal necessities and comforts
of life, and are thus translated into the most
prolific class of the community.

The class of those unproductive through

poverty may now, in a great measure, cease to exist, until the demand for labour shall be fully supplied, after which there will probably arise a slight redundancy of workmen, some of whose families may again fall back into an unprolific class, and thus society will be restored to its former condition. Augment the comforts and the supply of food to the poor, and the rapidity of their increase will be astonishing. It appears to be impossible to make any permanent reduction in the population of a country, merely by taking away a portion of its inhabitants, while the means of subsistence remain unaltered. Dr. Franklin observes, that "it would be difficult to find the gap that had been made by a hundred years' exportation of negroes, which has blackened half America."*

Take the case of a falling off in the supply of food. When from the failure of any branch of commerce or manufactures, or from defective crops, the resources of a country are inadequate to the support of its inhabitants, and a diminu-

* Franklin's Miscellany, p. 9,

tion of the population is in consequence required, if this diminution be not very great, it is gradually brought about by a smaller proportion of the offspring of the poor being reared, by a greater tendency to sickness, and an increased mortality amongst those of all ages. In years of great distress there is also a diminution in the number of births.

Thus the scantier numbers of the rising generation, with the increased general mortality, will soon adapt the amount of population to its more contracted resources. It is true, that for a time this class of misery and privation may be considerably extended; nevertheless, the benevolence of this law of Nature will not be disputed, if we compare it with the condition to which the population would have been reduced had this injurious rate of increase continued in operation until people perished from actual starvation.

In some countries the food that can be procured is occasionally insufficient to afford a bare subsistence to its inhabitants. Here it is evident that their numbers must by some means be reduced; and, if we except emigration, which ap-

pears to be practicable only under particular circumstances, this can only be effected by death. Starvation however (perhaps the most miserable of all deaths) occurs but rarely, and is never the instrument by which a numerous community is kept within the means of subsistence. The manner in which this augmented mortality is developed is such as to occasion the least possible misery. The greater proportion of deaths take place among very young children; these having scarcely crossed the threshold of life, can hardly be said to have any regrets at leaving it; and although the grief of the parents may be intense, they have not had time to endear themselves to any numerous circle of friends. Next to these come the aged and infirm, those who have already enjoyed the greater part of the sum of happiness allotted to them in this world, and whose lives are clouded over by sickness and decrepitude. Dr. Villermé observes, that "while one epidemic falls heaviest upon the young, another will fall heaviest upon the aged. But among the same number of sick at each age, the chances of death will be great among children

in proportion as their age approaches the period of their birth, and among old persons in proportion as they are advanced in years ; and that those who live in misery are much more often attacked by disease, and much oftener fall victims to it, than those in more comfortable circumstances.”*

“ In general, the law of mortality, in the early ages, under five years, is more variable and more uncertain than that which regulates the middle portion of life ; the same remark applies to the advanced periods of life ; so that the result of tables that relate to infancy and old age are less exactly known.”†

When, however, mankind are afflicted by the more virulent epidemic diseases, although the very young and the aged may be the first attacked, death will spread its ravages among those of all ages. Yet still is Divine benevolence apparent, for the pestilence will generally be most destruc-

* “ Annales d’Hygiène Public,” 1833, part 2.

† “ Recherches Statistiques sur la Ville de Paris,” &c. vol. i. p. 16.

tive where existence is most miserable, epidemic disorders rarely making much havoc where there is little distress. “ During the terrible progress of the fever in Ireland in the years 1817, 1818, 1819, it was generally remarked throughout the country that fever did not spread through families in comfortable circumstances; and indeed it might be asserted, that the danger of such extension diminished as the persons visited by it were elevated in society. While fever raged in every part of Ireland, it is curious to remark that the army suffered comparatively little from it, because the private soldier is better fed, lodged, and clothed, than the peasant in Ireland. The prevalence was nearly twice greater among the inhabitants than among the army.”* The cholera in like manner appears to attack by preference the sickly, the miserable, the uncleanly, and the drunken.

Thus, while the general rate of increase of population is regulated by the proportionate un-

* Barber and Cheyne—“ Account of the Fever lately prevalent in Ireland.”

prolificness of the higher orders, the more immediate adaptation of the numbers of the people to the available supply of food is effected by the contraction or dilation of the third or pauper class, and this process is carried on in such a manner as to occasion the least possible suffering to the community at large.

CHAPTER VIII.

CASE IN WHICH POPULATION HAS NO TENDENCY
TO INCREASE.

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark."

HAMLET, Act I., Scene IV.

THE various means employed by Divine Providence to rectify the temporary redundancies or deficiencies of population, also how mankind is permanently restrained from multiplying to excess, have been already treated of.

The next state of society that will come under our consideration, is where the unprolific orders are too extended, and where the numbers of the people have consequently a tendency to diminution. Either the population of such a country will waste gradually away, or it must be continually recruited by immigrations from abroad.

We shall generally find that those nations which have risen to power by military virtue alone, were prolific whilst they continued poor, but when their greatness had attained its full maturity, and they resigned themselves to luxury and repose, so far from having an excess of population, not only their numerical strength, but even their continuance as a nation, was often dependent upon the influx of foreigners.

Most of the empires of antiquity appear to have declined by what was then supposed to be the natural decay of old age. In modern nations, on the contrary, we find power and stability augmenting with wealth and artificial enjoyments, apparently the very causes of the decline of those of former ages.

The internal structure of the chief modern nations is, however, radically different from those of antiquity. In the modern nations that have risen to greatness by their internal industry, wealth is distributed in various proportions through the several classes of the community, beginning with the great landlords, merchants, and manufacturers, and descending in a regular

gradation down to the lowest pauper ; and any gap that may occur in the numbers of the less prolific classes is soon replenished from those whose tendency to increase is more rapid : but where the greatness of a nation arose from conquest alone, there being no creative power of wealth, the splendour of the capital was but the poverty of the provinces ; the riches of the individual but so much abstracted from the comforts of the multitude. Thus the luxury of the great occasioned the degradation of the industrious ; one cause of unprolificness creating another.

While the nations of antiquity were small and rude, if the chance of war gave them victory over an enemy, it disciplined their army, increased their resources, gave them confidence in their strength, and stimulated their love of fame and of plunder. As long as there remained enemies abroad to afford employment to their arms and to consume their wealth, they flourished and increased. They were able to leave military colonies to secure their conquests, and to allow their citizens to emigrate to distant lands. But as soon as their hostile neighbours were sub-

duced, and they had nothing to fear or to hope from abroad, then did the evil constitution of their society develop itself. Their governors of provinces, generals, and others who had filled posts of power and profit, would have accumulated wealth, most of them probably by unjust and violent means. Now there would exist but very few in the intermediate stations of life between these and the lowest rabble, and the unprolific classes would form a great and constantly increasing portion of the community. Either the population will rapidly decline, or its numbers must be recruited by an immigration of free settlers or of slaves. At first, perhaps, only the most abject offices will be performed by imported slaves; they will then perhaps be introduced into the households of the great. Trade will afford employment to many more. In time we shall see them swelling the ranks of the army; next perhaps filling the higher offices of the state; and more than once has the diadem of imperial Rome adorned the brow of a barbarian slave.

Such was the course run by ancient Greece, by Rome, and at a later period by the Turkish

empire, and probably by most of the empires of the east, and by the nations of antiquity. History informs us, that whilst they continued poor, notwithstanding their almost continual state of warfare, their population was redundant, their citizens were continually emigrating and planting colonies abroad, but that as their wealth increased, the number of their free citizens diminished, and their places were supplied by imported slaves. In the early periods of the Roman history, the army was recruited only in Rome, afterwards only in Italy, at length in all the provinces. During even the most flourishing era of the Athenian commonwealth, the number of free citizens was gradually reduced from thirty thousand to twenty-one thousand. Gibbon supposes, that in the time of Claudius, the number of slaves was at least equal to that of the free citizens of Rome ; and this, notwithstanding the continual emancipation of slaves, and their admission to the rights of citizens. Cicero observes, that were it not for the number of slaves annually emancipated, the citizens of Rome would become extinct.

There appears to have been a perpetual influx of slaves to Italy from the remoter provinces, particularly Syria, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Asia Minor, Thrace, and Egypt ; yet the numbers of the people did not increase in Italy, and writers complain of the continual decay of industry and agriculture. The population of modern Turkey, in like manner, is annually recruited by importations from its remote provinces.

Contrast the state of the population of Rome under the emperors with that of the barbarous nations of the same period. The numerous eruptions of the savage tribes of the north of Europe into the wealthy and luxurious regions of the south gave rise to an opinion that the north of Europe contained at that period a dense and excessive population. Year after year, countless multitudes of these Gothic savages poured in upon these favoured regions, like flights of locusts. They perished by thousands, by the sword, by famine, and by their own excesses ; so that but a few scattered bands returned to their own country out of the hosts that left it but a few months before. Yet again and again they issued

from it in undiminished numbers. Great, consequently, has been the surprise of some antiquaries in finding no trace of any considerable population having ever existed in those countries. Among the ancient Germans, there were no higher class checking the rate of increase by their unprolificness ; consequently, the number of the population was restrained within the limits of their means of support solely by the amount of mortality ; and the martial habits of the people occasioned the greater number of the deaths to take place in war. Now the great superprolificness of a people thus circumstanced would fill up, in a very rapid manner, the vacancies thus formed.

Agis and Cleomenes, kings of Sparta, finding that, instead of the nine thousand citizens of the time of Lycurgus, there remained only seven hundred, and that all the landed property was divided among less than a hundred, undertook to restore the ancient laws relating to the distribution of property.* The consequence was, that

* Plutarch's Lives of Agis and Cleomenes.

Lacedemonia recovered its ancient power, and became again formidable to all Greece.

The introduction of slavery among modern nations, by dividing the people into two classes,—a wealthy, and a degraded pauper class,—appears to have a similar effect in retarding the population and prosperity of a country. Take the following passage from De Tocqueville: — “ A century had scarcely elapsed since the foundation of the colonies at present forming the United States, when the attention of the planters was struck by the extraordinary fact, that the provinces that were comparatively destitute of slaves increased in population, in wealth, and in prosperity, more rapidly than those which contained the greatest number of negroes. This consequence seemed to be the more difficult to explain, since the settlers, who all belonged to the same European race, had the same habits, the same civilization, the same laws, and their shades of difference were extremely slight.”*

Probably a modern slave-holding state is the

* “ Democracy in America,” vol. ii. p. 327.

nearest approximation we have to the condition of those ancient nations that were powerful from the extent of their dominions, There is, however, always this important difference, that in modern times the art of printing and the diffusion of knowledge gives public opinion a certain power of checking flagrant instances of oppression and cruelty.

In that state of society that may be termed the dotage of ancient military empires, (that is, of those whose greatness is derived from conquest, and not from internal industry,) we have a number of individuals nursed in luxury, and fed with adulation, with no restraint upon their conduct, with every temptation to profligacy and vice. These will break like hornets through the thin web of the law, nor has public opinion any power to restrain them; for the sentiments of dependents that earn their subsistence by administering to their evil passions can only be to them an object of contempt.

It appears to be the intention of Providence, that a society so replete with injustice, dissolute-

ness and crime, not only shall not, by a rapid increase, spread its baneful influence abroad, but shall be even incapable of continuing its own existence without a constant supply of recruits from its less contaminated neighbours.

Where the wealth of the great is abstracted from what was before distributed generally among the people, the riches of such an aristocracy will ever be a prelude to national ruin. But where the wealth of the great has been created by industry, (no matter by whom enjoyed,) it is so much added to the national stock. and the riches of such an aristocracy will ever augment the national happiness, power, and stability.* Among nations that have risen to importance by internal and commercial industry, for every individual possessed of a revenue of 20,000*l.* there will be many hundreds of one of

* This observation is particularly applicable to modern kingdoms in a military point of view, since the invention of gunpowder, and the custom of keeping up standing armies : the strength of a country depending less at present upon their numbers and personal courage, and more upon their command of capital, military science and discipline.

1000*l.*, and for every person possessing one of 1000*l.*, there will be a still greater proportion of persons possessed of more limited incomes ; and these last will probably, for all practical purposes, be as well educated as the first. The former will merely stand more prominent in the eyes of the world, will be more exposed to the animadversions of the multitude, and their actions more closely scrutinized by the censorship of public opinion.

In a society thus constituted, the great will no longer be conspicuous for their insolence and oppression, or for their voluptuous effeminacy. They will fear the reproaches of the educated and influential portion of the community ; and as they dread its reproaches, so will they seek its applause. Where the middling classes are numerous, how exalted soever a man may be by power, wealth, or rank, he will be cautious of committing any flagrant action that might lower him in the public estimation. The vices of the great will be private, and no longer displayed to the world as tests of nobility or models for imi-

tation ; and when their names are proclaimed abroad, it will be as the patrons of science or as the supporters of charitable institutions.

Thus, in certain states of society, where the rich live in great luxury, and the remainder of the population is in a state of abject slavery, extreme misery and vice, population will have no tendency to advance. And the very existence of such a nation will depend upon a constant supply of recruits from other countries.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE CAUSES WHICH MAY OBSTRUCT THE
GROWTH OF THE MANUFACTURING AND HIGHER
ORDERS.

“ One incessant struggle renders life
One scene of toil, of suffering, and of fate.”

THOMSON'S SEASONS—Winter, v. 350.

WE have seen, in a former chapter, how the manufacturing and higher orders are gradually added to society, as improvements in agriculture afford an increasing surplus produce from the land for their support. There are, however, some cases in which the science of agriculture may be considerably improved without creating any fund for the support of persons unconnected with the land.

The manufacturing and higher classes may be prevented from rising into existence—

By the too minute subdivision of property,
 By the insecurity of property, or
 By the exportation of rent.

If a country be divided among a number of small proprietors, and any law or custom prevail having a tendency to create a continual subdivision of properties, the size of these properties will in time be reduced to a point, below which if subdivided, the shares will be insufficient to maintain their cultivators. The more productive the land, the further will it be capable of subdivision,—the greater fertility counterbalancing the smaller extent; and no surplus will remain for the support of manufacturers as a distinct class.

Society will now be reduced to nearly the state in which it was in the infancy of agriculture: every man will confine his wants within the narrowest compass, and the few articles that necessity requires will be fabricated at home.

Now if the land will barely support its present cultivators, and population has as strong a tendency to increase—that is, the births bear the same proportion to the population—as before,

it is evident that many must fall back into that class which, from want and misery, are unable to reproduce their numbers. In density of population this country will resemble one that is wealthy and civilized; while, in the proportion of births to the population it will resemble one in which a scanty population is scattered over a large extent of fertile country, a large majority of the population consisting of the most prolific class of society.

Where a country is but thinly occupied, every advance of population augments the happiness and resources of the nation, by promoting the cultivation of new lands, by augmenting the produce of those before under cultivation, and thus calling into existence the manufacturing classes. Whilst in this artificial and unnatural state, every addition to the numbers of the population is an addition to their misery. Here the whole population consists of agricultural labourers, the most prolific class of society, with no unprolific classes requiring recruits, with no waste lands requiring tillage, with no manufactures requiring hands. The extensive poverty

thus induced will bring down many families to that point in distress at which they are incapable of reproducing their number; a greater proportion of children will perish in infancy; epidemic diseases, the constant attendants upon poverty and privation, will increase in frequency and in virulence. A society so constituted will bear about the same resemblance to the primitive agricultural state, that an old tree, kept artificially clipped and dwarfed, does to a healthy growing plant of the same size. If accurate statistical documents of such a country could be procured, there would be seen a very large proportion of births as compared with the population,—thus shewing the tendency to rapid increase; while the high proportion that the deaths would bear to the population would shew that the tendency to increase was counteracted by the premature mortality induced by want and misery. Had, however, property been unequally distributed, which, if uncounteracted by particular laws, it has a natural tendency to become, the unprolificness of the higher orders would

have formed a salutary counterpoise to the superprolificness of the labouring classes.

Not only does minute subdivision of land prevent surplus produce being raised for the support of persons unconnected with agriculture, but the exertions of the agriculturists themselves appear to be limited by their immediate wants ; so that, when an unfavourable season occurs, they are liable to suffer from famine.

“ It will be found, indeed, generally, that in almost all countries which are particularly subject to scarcities and famines, either the farms are small or the labourers principally paid in land. China, Indostan, and the former state of the Highlands of Scotland furnish some proofs, among many others, of the truth of this assertion.”* Mr. Young, in his tour in France, with reference to the smallness of the properties there, notices the distress arising from the least failure of the crops ; and observes, that such a deficiency as in England passes almost without notice, is

* Malthus, vol. ii., Appen. p. 464.

in France attended with dreadful calamities.* The extensive poverty and redundant population throughout the greater part of Ireland, are, in a great measure, attributable to the minute subdivision of land. For although, as regards the head landlords, Ireland may be said to be divided into large properties, yet as it is there the custom to let leases for long terms, (three lives or thirty-one years, or, as more commonly the case of late years, two lives or twenty-one years,) the property may be considered as belonging rather to the first tenant than to the original landlord.

The first tenant usually subdivides his farms into smaller holdings and sublets. The second often subdivides and sublets again. There are sometimes as many as three or four middlemen between the head landlord and the occupying tenant. It is also a common practice among subtenants to partition their farms among their children at their death, and even to allot a portion to a son upon his marriage. A farm, originally let to one person, at the termination of the

* "Tour in France," vol. i. ch. 12, p. 409.

lease is occasionally found divided into forty or fifty distinct tenements, swarming with a population in the lowest stage of poverty, barely able to support existence upon the cheapest food, without any surplus to bestow upon comfort or cleanliness.*

Now, had this system of subletting and subdividing not prevailed, towards the end of one of these long leases, the tenant, from improvements made upon the farm, and the probable rise in the value of land in the interim, might be expected to be in affluent circumstances, his expenditure giving employment to a number of tradesmen and others in the middling classes, persons for the most part enjoying all the real necessities and conveniences of life. He would, probably also thus afford support to a greater number of persons than the farm in the above subdivided state would give a bare subsistence to. It should also be remembered that a person of substance, living in a small village, is able to relieve any immediate and pressing distress.

* Committee of the Lords on the State of Ireland.

while, where every one is equally in want, pity and condolence are nearly all that can be afforded.

It is not, however, intended to recommend the sweeping consolidation of farms frequently practised in this country, by which hundreds of poor industrious persons are at once thrust from their homes and left to starve upon the highways, or to obtain a precarious subsistence from the cold charity of strangers ; while the pitiful gain thus accruing to the landlord is often more than counterbalanced by the disturbed state of the country, which the depriving so many families of an honest means of subsistence naturally produces. All that is here meant to be asserted is, that the minute subdivision of land in Ireland is an evil ; the remedy is another consideration.

In the particular case of Ireland, the excess of the agricultural population in a manner reacts upon itself, so as to occasion a still farther excess. The great superabundance of agricultural labourers, who understand only the use of the spade, raises enormously the rents of small tenements. A very small proportion of the peasantry of this country are dependent entirely

upon their hired labour ; their employment is uncertain, and there being no poor's rate to support them when out of work, their subsistence is precarious, unless they have a potato ground to fall back upon when unable to procure employment abroad. So strongly does this operate upon the mind of the labourer, that in very many instances the rent he pays exceeds the value of the *whole* produce of his land, and he provides for its payment by coming over to England to labour at hay time and harvest. Thus, those who have land to let can obtain the highest rent by dividing it into the smallest portions ; for the peasant, knowing that his only safety from starvation lies in the possession of a piece of ground, will make any sacrifice to obtain it ; and the middleman, who takes land for the purpose of reletting, having only a temporary interest, little regards the ultimate injury that may accrue to the property.

Nothing, however, is here intended to be said against that most judicious of all charities, the letting to the labourer a small portion of land to cultivate upon his own account—that is, just so

much as will occupy his spare hours, without interfering with his hired labour. This man will have a great advantage over the large farmer, inasmuch as his labour costs him nothing, for he merely employs his spare hours, that would otherwise be lost ; but as the word labourer is here used as a relative term, implying the existence of an employer, the advantage of this mode of cultivation can only be obtained in the neighbourhood of large farms and to a limited extent.

It is where the market of labour is overstocked, and where the poor man is forced to place his *chief* dependence upon his land, and not upon his hired labour, that the evils of this system are to be deplored.

The formation of the manufacturing and higher classes of society may be obstructed by the insecurity of property.

In all countries where pure despotism prevails, and where acts of cruelty and injustice are seldom visited by disgrace or punishment, insurmountable obstacles are opposed to the formation of the manufacturing and higher classes. If a man

by labour and industry has rendered his property conspicuously superior to that of his neighbours, it becomes immediately an object of plunder. Thus, however productive may be his land, he has little interest in raising a greater crop than is necessary for the support of his family. This insecurity will consequently have a tendency to reduce the surplus produce raised from the land ; and where the extent of properties affords no commensurate advantage, their owners will see them divided with little regret.

There appears indeed to be an intimate connexion between the minute subdivision of land and the insecurity of property. The insecurity of property necessarily prevents any farming operations from being carried on upon a large scale ; and where property is from other causes very minutely subdivided, the absence of persons holding any stake in the country, and the general distress usually attendant upon minute cultivation, is apt to keep the country in an unsettled state.

Where a real despotism prevails, if a merchant acquire wealth by trade, or a man in power by the plunder of his inferiors, it is seldom long

before he is despoiled of it, either as a punishment for some imaginary crime, or upon some other frivolous pretext. In this state of society, the population may be divided into two classes, —the plunderers and the plundered. There may be, indeed, a few traders who by stealth occasionally amass considerable riches, for, from the risk attending all commercial transactions, profits will be very high. If, however, these continue to reside in the country, they eventually fall back into one of the above-mentioned classes; for if they remain private individuals, they are sooner or later plundered and reduced to beggary; if they procure any government or place of power, they probably strut their hour upon the stage, and then are bow-strung like their predecessors in office; if they emigrate, which is their only chance of security, the benefit of their wealth is lost to that country.

In such a state of uncertainty in all things, men seek only the means of present gratification, and enjoying life while it is theirs; none think of toiling and hoarding, when the next moment all may be swept away from them. Where the

possession of property is dependent upon the caprices of others, credit cannot exist, property cannot accumulate ; in short, in this condition of society, with the exception of a few powerful plunderers, (whose wealth is derived, not from superabundance of production, but from extortions from the needy,) the middling and higher orders have no existence.

There is probably no country in the world in which land is, throughout its whole extent, so minutely subdivided as it is in China. Here all land is supposed to belong to the emperor, and whatever is considered more than enough for the support of the cultivator is seized as rent due to the government : it is therefore the interest of no one to augment the produce of his farm beyond what is necessary for the consumption of his family. Large farms will, in consequence, be negligently cultivated ; and the occupiers, having more land than they have occasion for themselves, will be willing to subdivide it among their children. Barrow observes, that “ from the distribution of land in such portions to each as are reckoned just sufficient to maintain a family,

nine-tenths of the peasantry may be described as cottagers, each renting just as much land as supports his family." " All their laws respecting property are insufficient to give it that stability which alone can constitute the pleasure of accumulating wealth. The avarice of men in power may overlook those who are in moderate circumstances, but the affluent rarely escape their avaricious grasp."* " The talent of invention is there seldom exercised beyond suggesting the means of providing for the first necessities and the most pressing wants. A man, indeed, is afraid here to be considered as wealthy, well knowing that some of the rapacious officers of the state would find legal means of extorting his riches from him.† There is no middling class of men in China ; in fact, there are no other than the governors and the governed. If a man, by trade or industry in his profession, has accumulated riches, he can enjoy them only in private. He dares not, by having a grander house or finer clothes, let his neighbour perceive that he is

* Barrow, p. 379.

† Ibid. p. 177.

richer than himself, lest he should betray him to the commanding officer of the district, who would find no difficulty in bringing him within the sumptuary laws, and in laying his property under confiscation.”* “The emperor himself has very little surplus revenue at his disposal, and is frequently distressed for money to pay his army, and other exigencies of the state.”† “The very dwelling of the emperor, and the grand hall in which he gives audience, when divested of the gilding and gaudy colours with which they are daubed, are little superior, and much less solid, than the barns of a substantial English farmer.”‡ Not only is there no considerable wealth in the hands of individuals, but the whole amount of capital in the empire can be but small, from the high rate of interest, 36 per cent. being the legal rate, from 12 to 15 per cent. being that usually paid.

China therefore appears to be a country consisting chiefly of the labouring classes. It has been before remarked, that the tendency to in-

* Barrow, p. 389. † Ibid. p. 101. ‡ Ibid. p. 124.

crease among persons of this condition is very strong. If, therefore, the population of China has remained nearly stationary for the last thousand years, some cause must be sought for capable of counteracting this tendency to superfecundity. Now, as this counterpoise does not exist in the comparative barrenness of the higher orders, we must seek it in the numbers of the poor, and in the intensity of their distress. This supposition is in accordance with the accounts given by those who have visited this singular country. The population of China may be said to press closer upon the limits of food than that of any other nation known to us, either by the description of travellers, or the history of antiquity.

Barrow observes thus :—“ With such advantages, (low taxes, &c.) unknown in most other countries, and such great encouragement given to agriculture, one would be led to suppose that the condition of the poor must be less exposed to hardship here than elsewhere ; yet, in years of scarcity, many thousands perish from absolute want of food ; government has seldom been able to lay up in store a sufficient quantity of

grain to meet the necessities of the people in seasons of general calamity.”* “There are rarely three successive years without famine in one province or another.”†

From the general subdivision of land into portions, so small as to be barely sufficient to support their cultivators, those who are born, and for whom no plot remains, are reduced to a degree of privation and wretchedness under which, perhaps, none but a Chinese would tolerate existence. There is scarcely any substance that can, by possibility, be converted into human food, that is too disgusting for the palate of a Chinese.

The poorer classes are described as living upon cats, dogs, rats, or any offal they find floating upon the rivers and canals. Dogs, indeed, are looked upon as delicacies; for the necessity of having recourse to every description of food has rendered fashion less fastidious.

Their general mortality must be greatly enhanced by their mode of living, especially by

* Barrow, p. 400.

† Ibid. 398.

their want of cleanliness. The following passage is taken almost at random from Dr. Abel's work :—"On my return, I passed through the village, and was presently surrounded by its male inhabitants. Dirt, squalidness, and extreme poverty were, as usual, their leading characteristics. Their habitations were miserable beyond anything that England can exemplify ; built of mud, and divided into unfurnished rooms, ventilated by several apertures, they looked more like the dens of beasts than the habitations of men."*

They have one custom that strongly marks the sense they themselves have of the large proportion that the number of births bear to the means of subsistence ; when a father considers that he has as many children as he can conveniently maintain, those born to him afterwards are destroyed, with as little ceremony as so many puppies would be in England. Nor is this looked upon with abhorrence ; on the contrary, to free a child from a life that could only have been supported in misery is considered an act

* "Abel's China," p. 27.

of virtuous humanity and parental kindness. This practice is not, however, to be considered as forming any check to the advance of population; for probably many are tempted to marry by the consideration of this economical method of providing for a family, who, when the infant is born, find the feelings of a parent too powerful for resistance. "Concerning the children that are exposed in Pekin, no inquiries are made, but the bodies are carried to a common pit without the walls, into which all those that are living, as well as those that are dead, are said to be thrown promiscuously."* Barrow calculates that about twenty-four infants are thus daily sacrificed in Pekin. "The number thus unnaturally slaughtered in the course of a year throughout the empire is differently stated by different authors, some making it about 10,000, others 30,000. The truth probably lies between them."†

Thus it appears that, in consequence of the great subdivision of property in China prevent-

* Barrow, p. 163.

† Barrow.

ing the higher orders of society from rising into existence, the population has been hindered from exceeding the limits of its resources solely by the extreme misery and privations of the poor.

It has been before observed, that where little surplus produce is raised, little progress can be expected in either the useful or ornamental arts. Let us apply this rule to China. They have very little machinery, and that little of the rudest and most simple kind. Their ships are in the highest degree awkward and unwieldy. "Ten or twelve thousand subjects from the port of Canton alone are reckoned to perish annually from shipwreck." "When a ship leaves a port upon a foreign voyage, it is considered an equal chance that she will never return; and when the event proves favourable, a general rejoicing takes place among the friends of all those who had embarked on the hazardous voyage.* Their architecture is devoid of taste, grandeur, beauty, solidity, or convenience; their knowledge of painting and perspective is about on a par with that of the Hindoos, or ancient Mexicans; their

* Barrow, p. 41.

sculpture is equally gross ; the simplest questions in arithmetic are mysteries almost beyond their comprehension ; their currency is silver, not stamp, but weighed out at each payment.* The use of soap is unknown to them.

Perhaps the truest test of civilization is the treatment of the fair sex ; here, among the wealthy, the females are imprisoned slaves ; among the poor, drudges. Daughters are invariably sold. The bridegroom must always make his bargain with the parents of his intended bride ; the latter has no choice,—she is a lot in the market, to be disposed of to the highest bidder.

But the most important of the arts has not been yet noticed—agriculture. It has been before observed, that as the size of farms is enlarged by the agency of capital or improved science, a more abundant produce can be raised upon the same extent of land ; and also, as a general rule, that population is eventually augmented. How will these rules apply to China, where a square mile of cultivated land is sup-

* Abel, p. 113.

posed to afford subsistence to a greater number of persons than the same extent anywhere else ? First, as to the amount of produce raised. From the circumstance of the mass of the people being obliged to subsist upon the cheapest food, the object of the farmer will be quantity, and not quality ; for he must ever accommodate his productions to the demand of his customers. He will consequently endeavour to raise food in its cheapest and most abundant form,—that which will satisfy hunger, not that which will gratify the palate. Every field will be under tillage ; none left in pasture. Also, the poverty of the Chinese seldom admits of the use of horses ; thus, the produce that these would have consumed goes to the maintenance of human beings. The numbers, therefore, living upon a certain extent of land, are no just criterion of the merits of any system of agriculture, but rather shew the nature of the market that the farmer has to supply. It should here be observed, that rice so far exceeds any other crop in productiveness, that the amount of human food raised in rice countries cannot, with pro-

priety, be compared with that of countries whose climate does not admit of its cultivation.

Many have been misled by observing land much subdivided frequently supporting a dense population, to consider the numbers of the people a test of the efficiency of a system of husbandry. It is, indeed, possible, that minute farms may produce a greater crop than those that are larger; but in the great majority of instances, the agency of capital and science that occasions an increase in their extent will also shew an improvement in the quantity, as well as in the quality of their productions. It is not, of course, meant to compare the produce of a garden with that of the adjoining fields, but a country minutely subdivided with one which is less so.

Minute cultivation is mostly found in poor countries, because agriculture upon a large scale cannot be carried on without capital. Minute cultivators, therefore, usually have for their object quantity alone, for they have to adapt their productions to a market of poor customers. The reverse is the case with farmers

cultivating with capital ; for the employment of capital naturally implies a wealthy community.

We next come to apply to China the general rule, that a population augments where the size of farms has been enlarged by the application of capital or improvements in agriculture. However efficient the industry of the Chinese may be when applied to a limited extent of garden, they have neither science nor capital to enable them to drain marshes or redeem waste land. A Chinese will perhaps force twenty-one plants to grow where an European would only raise twenty ; while a large portion of the best land in the empire lies waste, for want of capital and science to bring it under cultivation. The Chinese system of husbandry, as compared with the European, is as the gains of a miser, compared with those of a merchant, who, by a liberal outlay, procures a large return.

Barrow observes, that “ for want of the knowledge of reclaiming waste lands and swamps, a very considerable portion of the richest land, perhaps, in the whole empire, is suffered to remain a barren and unprofitable waste. If an

idea can be formed from what we saw in the course of our journey, and from the accounts that have been given of other provinces, he should conclude that one-fourth part of the whole country, nearly, consists of lakes and low, sour, swampy grounds, which are totally uncultivated. Except on the water and in the islands, the whole of the swampy country might be said to be uninhabited, and totally devoid of any kind of cultivation. Sometimes, indeed, a few miserable huts appeared on the small hillocks that here and there raised their heads out of the dreary waste." There are also extensive sandy downs. Some authors * also speak of large tracts of forest. Now, when it is considered that nearly the whole of the populous kingdom of Holland consists of what was formerly swampy land, similar or inferior to that above described, and that part of the celebrated agricultural district in Norfolk was formerly a sandy waste, it will not be assuming too much to assert, that if the land of China was in the hands of Europeans, it would afford subsistence to a far greater population ;

* Lettres Chinoises.

while there would be at the same time a still greater improvement in the general comforts and conveniences of life, and the middling and higher classes would rise into existence.

The minute subdivision of property, and the laws and customs in this country that prevent the accumulation, and secure enjoyment of wealth, deprive individuals of all stimulus to improvement. Civilization here rests in a torpid state. It had risen ages ago to a certain height, and beyond this point it does not appear to have made the slightest advance. If, however, industry and science had been allowed to ripen their natural fruit, not all the customs, laws, and ordinances of the empire would have been able to prevent progressive and radical changes in the structure of society.

The United States of America present us with a very peculiar state of society. Here very few are possessed of large fortunes, and very few in a state of abject poverty ; in short, there is no aristocracy and there is no pauper class, while the mass of the population is in the enjoyment of all the real comforts and conveniences

of life. This equality of fortunes is not, however, to be regarded as the result of the democratic principles and laws of the Americans ; it is a state of things chiefly arising from the particular circumstances of the country. America contains almost unbounded tracts of uncultivated but fertile land, and its population has sufficient knowledge of agriculture to render any part of it available. The only check to the efficient cultivation of the whole territory, is the limited number of labourers. The fastest possible rate of increase will therefore be the most beneficial ; and it should be borne in mind, that here the extension of agriculture augments the comforts as well as the food of the inhabitants, agricultural produce forming a staple export of the country. Now as the luxuries and prejudices that retard the increase of the higher classes in Europe have here but little influence, and few are reduced to a state of pauperism by want of employment, (any man having it in his power by industry and perseverance to raise himself above the reach of want,) the population of the United States will be found to consist chiefly of the most



prolific classes. But although the facility with which land can be obtained in the remoter parts prevents the subdivision of property being carried beyond a certain extent, yet the absence of an aristocracy is not without being felt ; for, from the circumstance of almost every person being obliged to labour with his hands, or to be employed a considerable portion of his time in commercial pursuits, although a moderate education is almost universal, men of science and erudition are very rare indeed ; for whatever may be the profusion of easy and cheap schemes for education, the human mind can never be sufficiently instructed without devoting a considerable space of time to those objects. The greater or the lesser possibility of subsisting without labour, is therefore the necessary boundary of intellectual improvement.*

But the benefits or the evils of the present condition of society in America can never be fairly estimated *as a permanent system* until all the land within the limits of the union shall have been cultivated in the best manner that the know-

* De Tocqueville -- " Democracy in America,"

ledge of the age will admit of. Then, if property shall continue liable to continual subdivision, the superprolificness of one portion of the community will effect for itself a counterpoise in the distress and misery of a pauper population ; and the fascinating theory of equal property and equal rights will fade away, like a pleasing and transitory illusion, until it may again find a resting place where land is abundant and population limited and civilized.

The formation of the wealthy and commercial classes may also be obstructed by the exportation of rent.

In a country in which all the land is on lease, and the whole rent exported, the commercial and wealthy classes of society will hardly rise into existence.* The cultivator of the richest will have no advantage over the cultivator of the poorest soil, for their rents will be in proportion, and these rents (or, in other words, the whole surplus produce of the land that remains after

* The profits of the farmer will afford support to a few persons of commercial and liberal professions.

remunerating its cultivators,) being exported, the country will be, in a great measure, deprived of the means of maintaining the other classes of the community that are unconnected with the land. As far as such a country is concerned, it would be immaterial if all these rents were annihilated as soon as created ; for, as was shewn in a former chapter, they are exported without any return.

It is, however, a common error to suppose that a country is deprived of the benefit of the surplus produce of the land, to the whole amount of the revenue of the absentee ; whereas, the non-residence of the absentee merely deprives the country of the benefit of that part of his expenditure which, if he had remained at home, would have given employment to persons resident in that country. A landlord, for instance, living in Ireland, has just the same facilities of using West of England cloth, Manchester silk, or Sheffield iron-ware, as if he were residing in England. When he comes over to England, therefore, Ireland cannot be deprived of that portion of his income which was all along spent upon English labour. The return of all Irish landlords would doubtless afford

employment and subsistence to a great number of persons of all classes, but not in anything like the proportion of the rents that are exported.

The moral influence, however, of a resident landlord, the natural guardian of the poor, is not so easily estimated, varying, as it necessarily does, with each individual ; but his absence probably on this score is more to be lamented than on account of the income spent abroad.

But although a landlord residing in his own country may expend a portion of his income in the support of foreign labourers, if he become non-resident his country will be deprived of the means of supporting those classes of the community that are unconnected with the land, to the amount of the remainder of his income.

It was shewn before, that minute subdivision of property, and insecurity of property, had a similar effect in checking the growth of the classes unconnected with the land.

Thus, whether a country is deprived of the advantages of a surplus produce from its land by the exportation of rent, by the insecurity of property, or by its minute subdivision, the same

effect will be induced, namely, a great deficiency, if not a total absence of the manufacturing and higher classes of society, and a corresponding deficiency in the comforts to be distributed among the population.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

“ There is mirth in Heaven
 When earthly things, made even,
 Atone together.”

As YOU LIKE IT, Act I. Scene IV.

THE increase of the human species may be compared to the growth of an individual : at first the progress is rapid, but every succeeding year adds less to its growth than the preceding ; and it may be expected to be in its highest state of perfection when it shall have attained its greatest magnitude. For civilization advancing with population, the comforts, conveniences, and enjoyments of life become more extensively diffused ; fewer are worn down with sickness, and the average period of death is removed to a greater distance ; a larger proportion of mankind are

enabled to live in ease and plenty, and the intensity of distress is diminished to the poor. In a barbarous state, population is regulated and restrained by pestilences, famines, and wars. As mankind advance in civilization, population becomes more and more governed by the diffusion of wealth, comforts, and enjoyments. Tyranny declines, and the power to oppress diminishes ; the reward of honesty, industry, and labour, becomes more secure and more abundant.

Yet how frequently do we hear complaints of the great inequality of condition, as naturally and necessarily attendant upon a high state of civilization,—the power of the great and wealthy,—and the abject condition of the poor ; whereas, the greatest inequality between man and man exists among barbarous nations—between the strong and the weak—between parent and child—and between master and slave. No such power to oppress exists in this country, in the most powerful of the great over the humblest of the poor. De Lolme well observed, that “ no one in Great Britain ever sees the man on whom depends his property, his life, or his liberty.”

The greatest equality between man and man is that which is found among the civilized nations of modern times. Every improvement in knowledge and legislation tends to improve the condition, both physical, moral, and religious, of the middling and lower classes. It is not that the higher orders of society are debased, but the inferior classes are raised to a higher level. Thus the spread of education has tended to equalize the diffusion of knowledge. The post office conveys the letter of the poor man with equal rapidity and punctuality as that of the rich ; the stage coach travels as fast as the carriage of the wealthy : it were endless to enumerate the various modes in which the middling and lower classes are gradually approximating in comforts, in enjoyments, and in knowledge, to the condition of those whom wealth has placed above them.

This is no new feature in modern society ; but in all countries that have been advancing in civilization it has been a constant cause of complaint with the aristocracy at all times. Shakespear puts the following words into Hamlet's

mouth :—" By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it ; the age is grown so picked, that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe."*

The aristocracy of England, wealthy and intelligent, possessed of no odious nor oppressive privileges, has been out-grown in the aggregate of wealth and intelligence by the middle classes. The wealth and intelligence of the higher orders have not receded ; on the contrary, they have advanced : but the aggregate knowledge and wealth of the middle classes have advanced more rapidly. Who does not here see the seeds of future change in habits, laws, and institutions ? yet who can foretel the results ?

The situation of England is unprecedented. She stands first in the civilized world,—in wealth, in knowledge, and in power. It is in vain to seek examples for the guidance of her legislature in the history of the ancient world ; it is equally vain to look for analogies among modern nations. In short, every advance that

* Hamlet, Act V. Scene I.

is made by such a country is a change from a known to an unknown state, and consequently a natural object of apprehension. We gradually see opened before us dangers of whose nature and extent we are ignorant, and against which we may fear that all our former precautions will be ineffectual. Our old habits, customs, and prejudices are attacked. The evils of the change are often conspicuous, while the good is hidden in the darkness of futurity.

There appears to be a tendency in a great portion of mankind to consider every innovation as an alteration for the worse. Congratulate an old man upon the improvements of the present day, how often will you find him as he was described of old, "*laudator temporis acti se puero?*" There are who delight in enlarging upon the supposed innocence and happiness of uncivilized man, who, they imagine, follows the dictates of pure nature, and consider his enjoyments to be the more perfect because his wants are fewer, and imagine everything effected by the intervention of man to be so much evil introduced into the world,—everything that exists in-

dependent of him to be nature as it issued perfect from the hands of the Creator : forgetting that man was not created for himself alone, but to be a mighty instrument in arranging, improving, and augmenting the various products of the earth. Each minute plant and little animal performs its allotted part : and shall man alone, because his agency is more powerful, and his connexion with his Maker more intimate, be alone destined to disturb the harmony of this beautiful fabric ?

Human industry drains marshes, throws up embankments against the sea, clears forests, and converts steril sands into productive farms ; it is hardly an exaggeration to say, that the very sun shines brighter upon a civilized than upon a barbarous country. In former times, the Rhine and the Danube were frozen over almost every winter ; events at present of very rare occurrence. The barbarians, who often chose that severe season for their inroads into the Roman provinces, transported, without apprehension or danger, their numerous armies, with their cavalry and heavy wagons, across these two rivers, over a vast and solid bridge of ice ; and it is matter

of daily observation in some parts of North America, that as the forests are cleared and occupied by man, the climate assumes a more southerly temperature.

Cæsar found in the Hercynian forest, which then overshadowed a great part of Germany and Poland, the rein-deer, an animal that cannot now subsist, much less multiply, in any country south of the Baltic. Modern improvements sufficiently explain the causes of the diminution of cold: the immense woods have been gradually cleared which intercepted the rays of the sun; the morasses have been drained; and in proportion as the soil has been cultivated, the air has become more temperate.*

“ The climate of ancient Germany has been mollified, and the land fertilized, by the labour of ten centuries, since the time of Charlemagne. The same extent of ground which at present maintains, in ease and plenty, a million of husbandmen and artificers, was unable to supply a hundred thousand lazy warriors with the simple

* Sir Humphry Davy.

necessaries of life.”* The desolate and dreary Gaul of the time of the Roman republic is at present studded with vineyards and olive gardens.

But the same advance in civilization that occasions an improvement in the animal enjoyments of man, produces a corresponding alteration in his moral and political condition. It is these latter alterations that are chiefly opposed to the wishes of the timid, and those interested or prejudiced in favour of old abuses or ancient forms. They are also looked upon with apprehension by the prudent and the wise, for it is difficult to distinguish improvement from the wanton love of change, and a false step in legislation is not easily retraced.

We consequently find in history, that legislative improvement is frequently resisted until abuses have risen to such a height that they cannot be remedied without a convulsion; indeed, it may be said with truth, that the legislation of a country is generally at least a century behind the improvements in the arts and sciences.

* Gibbon—"Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," vol. i. p. 262.

One of the first great changes in modern history was that of the Reformation, when men began to emerge from that realm of darkness, where learning was confined to bigots, and power to the sword. Numerous and frequent were the alterations that followed this dawn of modern civilization,—some so gradual and silent as to pass unnoticed by the historian, others sudden and violent, stamping deep their memorial in letters of blood. Among the latter, the revolution that was followed by the death of Charles the First stands prominent. The art of printing had extended the intelligence of the people, while commercial industry had given them wealth and independence. These causes had been long silently operating ; and had Charles been the most faultless monarch that ever reigned, unless he had been able to read the signs of the times, and see the changes in the structure of society, his fall would have been as certain. His error lay in attempting to govern according to the maxims of his predecessors, while the nation over which he ruled was no longer the same. The very line of conduct that

made the reign of Elizabeth so illustrious, would have conducted her successors as surely to destruction.

So in the French revolution of 1789 ; by the then existing law, all posts of authority and honour were vested in the nobility ; while the real and moral power of wealth and intelligence had for a length of time been gradually increasing in the other branches of the community. The nobles were no longer the feudal chieftains of former times, the protectors and benefactors of their helpless dependents ; the bourgeoisie were no longer ignorant, poor, or feeble. The change in the internal structure of society required an alteration in the laws and institutions, and however the change might have been modified or directed by existing authorities, it was not in their power permanently to resist its progress.

Considerable alteration appears to have taken place in the state of society in France between this period and 1830. At the time of the first revolution, when the throne was overturned, it was succeeded by the dominion of the most

ignorant, cruel, and impious mob of which we have any record. In 1830, when the crown was shaken from the head of the sovereign, the respectable and intelligent portion of the community quietly raised it from the ground and placed it on the brow of his successor. As civilization advances, the moral power of knowledge and reason becomes more extensive, and the sword is more frequently thrown aside as useless.

In the rudest stage of civilization, peace appears to be a blessing almost unknown. Every man's hand is against his neighbour, and the different tribes wage between one another an unceasing and exterminating warfare. The protection of the law and the magistrate is unknown; the strong man is a tyrant, and the feeble man a slave; the weaker sex are degraded still farther.

The rudest form of government appears to be that of tribes or clans, either temporary associations, like those of the ancient Germans, or permanently united by the ties of relationship, particular customs, or submission to certain chieftains. In the pastoral tribes, where courage

and vigour are not so essential, the father usually rules his immediate descendants, and where many families are united they follow the head of the eldest branch ; while the hunting tribes of America acknowledge only the command of the bravest in war, and of the most crafty when in pursuit of game.*

As the rights of property begin to be respected, and the structure of society becomes more complicated, these associations, under whatever denomination they pass, increase in magnitude. Conquerors are no longer contented to plunder ; they seek to extend their dominions, and to preserve by the arts of peace what they have obtained by violence. Next we have alliances for mutual defence, and the regulation of commerce between great and powerful kingdoms ; and the diplomatic race rise into existence. The plenipotentiaries of civilized nations meet and decide upon complicated questions of commerce or territory, affecting the interests of millions, with far greater facility than two neighbouring tribes

* Robertson—" History of America."

could settle the boundary of their hunting grounds or pasturage. In cases where in former times an exterminating war would have been waged, with perhaps a deadly feud entailed upon posterity, we have now a few harmless protocols exchanged, with occasionally the mediation of an adjoining government. Indeed, it is not always now in the power of two countries to go to war ; other nations will interfere to keep the peace.

Thus the condition of mankind continues improving from age to age ; and though the obstinacy or folly of our rulers have occasionally guided the march of civilization through scenes of turbulence and bloodshed, the evils they have done perished with them, while the advance of civilization sheds its blessings upon posterity.

On the page of history, the rise, the fall, the glory, the destruction, of conquerors, kings, empires, succeed one another like the figures of a passing pageant. But when they have gone by, they are but a story of past times, and cease to influence the future. Their tinsel and taudry

dazzle the eye while they are yet upon the stage ; but when they are lost to view, their power or their weakness, their justice or their oppression, their protection or their cruelties, are alike shrouded in the tomb.

These form, as it were, but the dress and trappings of history ; it is the condition of the species that really interests mankind.

He who makes known any discovery useful to his fellow-creatures, though his occupation may be despised and his name unrecorded, confers a benefit upon remotest generations.

Alexander lived, conquered, and died ; we read the history of his life and the manner of his death, but we no longer seek his protection nor fear his power.

The historian may leave unnoticed the names of Watt and Arkwright, though these have raised the scale of human existence ; they have increased our comforts and extended our power, and the blessings they have conferred can never be taken away. Their inventions, it is true, have been modified and altered ; yet subsequent changes have only made them more perfect ; their succes-



sors, powerful to improve, were impotent to injure ; and, like the original inventors, they advanced mankind successive steps in the great career of civilization, steps that will never be retraced.

As the mother dandles her child upon her knee, and watches its growth and the development of its mind, she feels confident that it can never return to its original condition. So the modern inhabitants of England feel equally sure that they can never return to the painted savages of ancient Britain.

Like the growth of a man is the improvement of his species. In sickness and in health, in war and in peace, in prosperity and adversity, it continually waxes in power, in knowledge, and in enjoyment.

Such has been the chronicle of our past progress ; and though the future is hidden from our view, the Almighty parent who guided us thus far still watches over us.

THE END.

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